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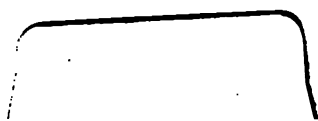
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L A V I N I A.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"LORENZO BENONI" AND "DOCTOR ANTONIO."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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L A V I N I A .

CHAPTER I.

MISS LAVINIA IN DESHABILLE.

MEANWHILE a certain seed sown by the count at Mr. Jones's convivial board—we mean that gentle hint for the private use of Miss Lavinia, about sundry wonderful pictures to be had almost for the mere trouble of the taking—well, that tiny seed, then, duly tended and nurtured, had so far grown and prospered as to give a fair promise of bearing fruit.

We have more pressing business on hand just now, than to enter into any detail of the skilful tactics, by which the two worthy confederates pushed on their new scheme. Besides, the process is as old as the world. We have inherited, all and each

of us, from mother Eve a tender point, which puts us at the mercy of the first comer, who chooses to tickle it. Now, the count and the chevalier were first-rate hands at this sort of game, and under their clever management, both uncle and niece's vanity was easily excited; this was no sooner the case, than difficulties were made to arise, and competition to start up. Prince So-and-So was on the scent of the hidden treasures. Duke What-is-his-name had dealers out in search, and some Cardinal or other had received *carte blanche* from his Holiness to secure the "gems" for the Vatican gallery. To make a long story short, after being well tantalized and brought to the proper pitch, Mr. Jones and Miss Lavinia felt like conquerors flushed with victory, when, late one night, and under the personal superintendence of the count himself, the "splendid remnants of a once princely gallery" were carried up to Palazzo Morlacchi, and deposited in Miss Lavinia's studio. There was as much mystery and as many recommendations to secrecy on this occasion, as if, instead of six small pictures, six barrels of gunpowder had been sent, for the purpose of blowing up Castle Sant' Angelo on the morrow.


The most immediate consequence of this eventful

deed was, that Paolo next morning, scarcely an hour after his conversation with Mortimer, received a special summons to the presence of his English goddess. The *taboo*, which guarded from all eyes profane the six master-pieces, was not to extend, the reader may recollect, to Paolo. An exception in his favour had been asked by Miss Jones, and willingly conceded by the count. The command was couched in a note from the young Roman's *diva*, consisting of one line and a half, dear and precious at all times, doubly so now. The pretty autographs of which she had been so lavish up to the day of Paolo's passing the Rubicon, had stopped altogether ever since, and the young Roman was literally athirst for the even, steady, elegant handwriting, every external perfection of which represented to his eyes—of such stuff are lovers made—a corresponding perfection of the writer's inner soul. Needless to say, he drank in eagerly each word of the blessed missive, and hastened to obey the summons.

He was met in the hall by Miss Lavinia's maid, evidently waiting for him, and ushered by her into the *sanctum sanctorum*, the young lady's private library and study, wherein he had set no foot for—what appeared to him ages. Paolo was asking himself,

with a heart that beat hard against his ribs, what could be the meaning of this sudden shower of favours, when an inner door was impetuously opened, and Miss Lavinia ran towards him, and with a little shout of triumph, exclaimed, "We have got them at last; come and see." With these words she led the way to that part of the room enclosed by a screen, which she held as peculiarly *her* atelier, and, pointing to six pictures of different dimensions ranged against the wall, she added, with great volubility, "Six jewels, are they not? we had a narrow escape of losing them. I will tell you all about it by-and-by; but there are people in the drawing-room just now, so I can't stay even for your congratulations—I leave you in good company," and she was off like a dart.

Paolo was disappointed, to be desired to look at pictures, when he had anticipated something, he scarcely knew what, but something very different; and, worse still, to be told to proceed to the inspection without the balm of *her* presence. However, he had a duty to discharge, and he set himself to it conscientiously, though with a very sorry face. He examined all and each of the pictures long and closely, took them up one by one, carried them to the window, carefully scanned the names or



initials on them, scanned their backs, wetted a corner of his handkerchief, and rubbed some apparently suspicious points, and at last returned them to their place, and sat down before them with as disconsolate a countenance as that he wore when we saw him for the first time seated in front of his own Brennus and Co.

Miss Lavinia surprised him in this melancholy contemplation. Her features, too, had undergone a change in the interval of her absence; a cloud had been gathering on her brow, which the sight of the young painter's elongated face was little calculated to disperse, and the inflections of her voice had lost much of the buoyancy they had revealed only a quarter of an hour ago. "You don't seem to enjoy the company of my favourites very much," said she, with the shadow of a shade of pique.

"I am sorry, very sorry, not to be able to sympathize more warmly with you," said Paolo, trying to speak kindly and cheerfully.

"Perhaps," returned the lady, and the voice had a deeper tinge of bitterness—"perhaps you consider such masters as Del Credi and Spada as beneath your admiration."

The Italian looked up at her in astonishment, and replied, "Have I ever done or said anything

which could lay me open to the imputation of the monstrous self-conceit your words seem to imply?" He paused, as if expecting some answer, but as there came none, he went on: "If I have, pray let me know when and how, that I may make honourable amends. I have the greatest respect for the names you have just mentioned, and rank *their* productions very high," with a marked emphasis on the word *their*—"I mean those that are really theirs."

"Do you mean to say that these pictures are not genuine?" asked the lady, sharply.

"To the best of my knowledge they are not," was the dry, decided answer.

Miss Lavinia started, and impatiently crushed a letter she was holding in her hand. This movement did not escape the keen eyes of the young painter; he added, with considerable warmth and earnestness, "I need not repeat how I regret to say anything that annoys or disappoints you; but am I wrong in believing that what you wanted in sending for me was honest advice, and not flattery?"

"Oh! as for flattery, no one can accuse you of any talent that way," retorted Miss Jones. Uttered in a different tone, the words might have been a merely playful repartee; as it was, they were weighty with reproach.

"Is it a fault, then, to speak plain truth?" exclaimed Paolo; "must one guard against it as against loaded pistols?"

"One ought, at all events, to guard against allowing preconceived notions to warp one's judgment," said Miss Jones, coldly.

"What preconceived notions could I have in this matter?" asked Paolo, his face growing dark.

"The buying of these pictures was the count's proposal; that was enough to prejudice you against them from the first. Whatever the count does or advises is wrong in your eyes, even what he does or advises for your own good."

"Pray, not a word more on that subject," said Paolo, making a great effort to control his feelings.

"Yes, whatever he does or advises is sure to meet with strenuous opposition from you," persisted the young lady.

"And with the most entire approbation from you," rejoined the young man. "Am I to shut my eyes, and declare what is mediocre, beautiful—extol copies, as originals, and that, too, solely on the strength of a count's recommendation? I defy any one not purblind," continued Paolo, striding angrily towards the unlucky pictures, and pointing to them in succession—"I defy any one to say that

that distorted arm could ever have been designed by Lionello, or that the colouring of that Madonna has the very least resemblance to Del Credi's colouring. As to those Canaletti, a pupil of six months' standing at San Luca would at a glance pronounce them spurious. I say again there never was a more bare-faced attempt at imposition."

"Are you aware that in saying so you impeach the character of a most respectable nobleman?" flashed out Miss Lavinia.

Paolo heard in these words the confirmation of his long-combated misgivings as to a certain foible of Lavinia's for titles, a foible the young democrat abhorred and recoiled from; hereupon, he entirely lost his temper. "Eh! dear me!" broke forth the young savage, in a passion; "to hear you, one would think this count was the fourth person of the Holy Trinity. What *do* you, what *can* you know, of this man and his respectability? No more than of the man in the moon. An utter stranger introduced to you by another utter stranger, casually met at a *table d'hôte*, that is all you have to found your opinion upon; unless you take it for granted that all sorts of goodness and worth are implied by the fact of being or styling oneself a count."

"Ah! indeed," said Miss Jones, with an adorably

saucy toss of her head : " Will you be so good as to spare me a repetition of your tirades against all who are noble by birth ? I know everything you have to say on that subject by heart."

" If you know everything by heart," began Paolo, and the deep colour in his cheek and the sparkle in his eye gave warning of some thundering retort ; but at this critical moment the entrance of Miss Lavinia's maid obliged him to choke back his angry words. Miss Jones was wanted in the drawing-room.

" What a bore !" groaned Miss Lavinia. " Don't go away till I come back ;" and with this injunction she once more left the Italian to his thoughts.

Paolo was wounded to the quick, less by the contradiction he had met with than by the manner in which it had been offered. Hitherto so gentle, and kind, and forbearing, how was it that on a sudden Lavinia stood before him, bitter, imperious, and harsh ? For the first time he perceived a tone in her voice, a look in her eyes, an expression in her face, of which he could never have surmised the possible existence under her former tones and looks.

" How fiercely she stood up in defence of her dear humbug of a count !" thought he, striding up and down the narrow limits of the young lady's

studio. "Between his opinion and mine, she did not hesitate for an instant. Well, let her trust in him, and believe in his wonders. What was the use of sending for me, since she had made up her mind already? To admire her purchase, I suppose. I begin to suspect Thornton is right after all. So long as you humour their whims, these proud islanders welcome you; dare to differ from them, and they throw you over without ceremony. I wonder how long she means to leave me here keeping guard on her treasures." Paolo took another turn, sat down, got up again, lost patience at last; and by the same way he had come in, made his exit.

Before proceeding further, we have two points to elucidate. The first is, that whatever might be Paolo's objections to aristocracy as an institution (the reader must not forget that he was a warm admirer of the Gracchi), he was too much a man of his time, and had intimately associated with too many fine fellows bearing handles to their names, to share in the prejudice of his father and grandfather, against individual nobles. The little respect he entertained for Count Fortiguerra rested on quite other grounds than the fact of his being a count.

The second point we wish to clear up is in justice

to Miss Lavinia. Let us then state at once that Paolo's opposition about the pictures, for the possession of which she had struggled with all the ardour and entireness of her nature, would not have put to flight her equanimity as it had done, but that at the moment she had had other and serious causes of vexation and provocation.

Miss Lavinia had got up that morning in the best of humours, and when, at breakfast, her aunt handed her a note containing an invitation to Prince Torlonia's first ball on the following Saturday, the best of humours had progressed into the highest spirits. In this happy frame of mind she had written her line and a half to Paolo, and given orders for his admission to her studio. Her greeting, though hasty (Admiral Blackett and his daughters were calling at the time, and she had to run away to them), had been cordial and gracious. So far all well; but in the short space of time between her first and second appearance in the studio, tidings had reached her, considerably ruffling the smooth surface of her morning mood. Now for some explanation of the occasion and nature of these tidings.

Miss Lavinia, in passing through Paris four months previously, had had some dresses made by that famous French artist of European celebrity,

Madame Lamy Housset, of the Rue de la Paix. It does an author's heart good to pen such names. Let the uninitiated be informed that out of the pale of Madame Lamy Housset there is no possible salvation for an English lady. At least Miss Jones and some others thought so, though there was a lively opposition in favour of Madame Zenobia—no, Palmyra—the association of ideas mislead me—and the Palmyrites turned up their noses very high at the Lamy Houssetites. This is a digression made with the best intentions. Well, then, Miss Jones was so enchanted with the dresses furnished by Madame Lamy that she determined to order some more for the winter season to be sent to Florence, Hôtel Hartmann, where the Joneses intended to stay till the end of October at least, when, owing to an unaccountable whim of Mr. Jones, the family left Florence so precipitately, that theirs was more like a flight than a departure. Miss Jones did not forget her dresses, but left the most minute directions with M. and Madame Hartmann about the expected box from Paris, desiring that it should be immediately sent to her at Rome, addressed to the care of the British Consul there. Full six weeks having elapsed, and there being no box forthcoming, Lavinia wrote to Madame Lamy Housset, to demand an

explanation of the delay. Madame Lamy Housset politely answered by return of post, that, according to Miss Jones's orders, the dresses had been duly forwarded to Florence four weeks back, but all search there for Miss Jones having proved fruitless, the box had been sent back to Paris, and had just reached her (Madame L. H.) Was Madame L. H. to send it to Rome or elsewhere?

I leave it to the public to imagine what were, what must have been, Miss Jones's feelings on reading this letter—the identical one we saw her clench and crush, while speaking to her lover. I am sure that all my fair readers will say as I do—and I do say it in the greatest earnest—that such a *contre-temps* was enough to provoke a saint, and just on the eve, too, of a ball at Torlonia's! It was while suffering under the first smart of this horrible intelligence, that Lavinia returned to Paolo, and, the magazine being full of powder, one stray spark, and it exploded.

Here arises a question. Would the explosion have taken place, had the untoward accident just related been made known to Miss Jones a fortnight back—that is, before Paolo made his declaration? All things considered, we must decide in the negative. During the period of what we may call Paolo's court-

ship, Miss Lavinia had not been without her share of crosses—who is?—and may have visited them, for aught we know, on her maid, or milliner, or the black steed which had the honour of carrying her, but they had nevertheless never clouded her intercourse with Paolo. To him, with one exception or two, and then in retaliation of real or imaginary offence given by him—to him she had invariably shown the same smooth brow, the same smiling face, the same amiable temper.

The fact is that, apart from the somewhat romantic and exciting circumstances under which she had made his acquaintance, and secured his services, apart even from the dazzle of his talent, Lavinia's fancy had been stirred into unusual animation by Paolo's odd ways of thinking and acting, by his touchy independence, by his occasional impetuous outbursts *d'enfant terrible*. One and all of these gave him the charm of a novelty and rarity, and inspired her with the wish to please him. She had accordingly done what Thornton protested all young people do, when they have this wish to please one another—she had *posed* a little, that is, exhibited to Paolo only the sunny side of her nature.

A practice which, far from condemning, we would highly recommend, especially to married people,

as nothing is more meritorious and conducive to harmony and happiness, than a constant habit of keeping one's disagreeableness in a misty background, and concentrating the light of one's agreeableness on those one loves. How many households would be more peaceable and comfortable than they are, had man and wife retained their courtship attire, instead of showing themselves in the *deshabille* of dressing-gown and slippers !

To return : Paolo's declaration, like a stone thrown on the smooth surface of a lake, had somewhat altered the limpidity of Miss Jones's disposition. The conflict of feelings which it had aroused, the magnanimous resolution it had in a measure forced upon her, worked a material change in our heroine; for one thing, it set Paolo before her in quite a new light. He had too little hold on her to be accepted without reservation, too much to be discarded altogether. She looked down on him from all the height of her sacrifice, esteeming him immeasurably her debtor; the very task she had assumed, of educating him up to her own level, added not a little to the sense of her superiority, and to that of his obligations. Then, the young man's ecstatic contemplation of her, his discreet and submissive ways, so different to what she had antici-

pated under the circumstances, while really touching her heart, nevertheless inspired her with a boundless confidence in her own power over him. This perfect security, and the new point of view from which she saw Paolo, brought about an unavoidable result. Whatever Paolo had won in one respect he had certainly lost in another.

We don't in general care extremely about much adorning of ourselves for people we have laid under great obligations, and on whose dutiful observance we can rely *quand même*. Miss Lavinia relaxed insensibly—without the least premeditation, of course—from that constant watch over herself, which had rendered her former intercourse with Paolo so even and agreeable, until this fine day, happening to be “out of sorts,” she gave way under middling provocation, and showed herself to be “out of sorts.”

Great was Miss Lavinia's surprise, and even alarm, when on her return presently to the atelier, making sure of finding Paolo where she had left him, she discovered the lair empty, and the wild cub gone; gone, no doubt, in anger; gone, perhaps, not to come again. It would only be what she deserved if he never did come back. A revulsion of feeling occurred. How had she dared to treat him so shamefully, after all the gentleness and delicacy he

had shown, after all the obligations he had conferred on her! Was she not aware of how sensitive he was, how keenly alive to any slight from those he loved!

There is nothing like the fear of losing that, for which, in truth, we care but moderately, for enhancing its value and leading us to the retrospective discovery of how fond we were of it, though without our knowledge. Were it only a tame squirrel, the favourite of an hour, the moment it yields to its instincts, and seeks its former wild haunts, alas! alas! what a charming little creature it was! what a pet! how we loved it! And then the fuss we make, and the trouble we take to restore the dear runaway to its cage. Alas! alas! indeed.

There was a something considerably like this taking place in Miss Lavinia. The simple fact of Paolo's disappearance at once brought out all his excellences in strong relief, and threw his shortcomings into the shade. Shame, repentance, and a grain of remorse dashed away all her late self-conceit, and notions of superiority. To the security in which she had basked of late, succeeded, as if by magic, the most poignant disquietude, lest he should be lost to her for ever. Acting upon the impulse given by the moment's feeling, the passionate

and wilful girl had no rest, until she was seated in the carriage, her aunt by her side, and driving to Via Frattina.

Paolo was sitting astride a chair with both his elbows leaning on its highest rail, in the attitude we have already twice seen him in ; the one, probably, into which he naturally fell when disturbed in his mind. He was in his shirt-sleeves—he felt hot, poor fellow ! though a sharp wind was blowing—and seemed quite absorbed in watching the blue curls of smoke issuing from his mouth. A poor smoker at all times, Paolo had not placed a cigar between his lips since the day he had first called at Palazzo Morlacchi ; and Lavinia knew this circumstance. Altogether, he had, at this present juncture, a devil-may-care appearance about him, which had little promise of good in it. At sight of his unexpected visitors, Paolo started up with such impetuosity that he knocked over his chair, let the cigar drop to the ground, made a dash at his coat, and, as red as a burning coal (we don't know whether more from confusion, pleasure, or pain), muttered some hasty words of apology.

“It is we who ought to apologize,” said Miss Jones ; “I am come to sue for peace.”

“For peace !” repeated Paolo ; “to sue for peace,

one must be first at war. I cannot conceive any such state between us; at least, not war existing on my side."

"Thank you," said Lavinia, "that sounds very kind and generous, if sincere," and checking herself, she added quickly, "and coming from you it must be sincere. However, you shall not prevent my making amends." He would have spoken, but she left him no time. "Yes, yes; I have been very provoking, foolish, opinionated, and rude."

"Oh! pray do not say another word," entreated Paolo.

"Well; say then that you forgive me."

"Indeed, I do with all my heart."

"Without mental reservation?" urged Miss Lavinia.

"Quite, quite, I assure you," eagerly affirmed the young man.

"No particle of resentment, not the tiniest, lurking anywhere?"

"Not the smallest atom."

"You are sure?" she went on insisting.

"Perfectly sure; I wish I knew how to convince you."

"Grant me a favour, and then I shall feel sure."

"Name it," said Paolo.

"Ah ! but promise first that you will grant it."

"I have an objection to promising first," returned Paolo; "however, I will break through all rules this once ; tell me your wish, and it shall be done."

"That is really kind," burst out Lavinia, in happy triumph. "We are going to Torlonia's ball next Saturday; you can easily get a ticket, I know: come and join us there, will you?"

"If you insist on it, yes," said Paolo, with a shade of annoyance in tone and look; "but——"

"No 'buts,'" interrupted Lavinia; "I do insist, and I do *so* wish it. I want you to do the honours of your beautiful fresco."

"You know it already very well," said he.

"Never mind, I have never seen it with you, and that is what I long for."

"I shall feel myself so out of place at a ball," he pleaded; "I have never been at one; it is a sort of thing for which I have no fitness."

"How do you know that, if you have never been to one?" inquired the girl.

"Instinct often warns us of what will disagree with us," replied Paolo.

"Do it, then, as a sacrifice for my sake; do it for the pleasure your being there will give me."

Against a request like this, expressed in the tone

of voice in which it was expressed, accompanied by the look with which it was accompanied (one of Lavinia's *irresistible* looks), Paolo was without defence of any kind, and surrendered at discretion. A defeat which the conqueror immediately acknowledged and rewarded, by placing in the hand of the conquered the whitest, smallest, and softest of hands conceivable. This done, the visitors withdrew, the aunt rather at a loss to understand what was the importance of the interview she had witnessed, the niece in high glee at having killed two birds with one stone—namely, restored the fugitive squirrel to his cage, and improved the occasion for teaching him a new trick or two.

Paolo, as in duty bound, spent the rest of the day in calling himself a brute for his unmannerly flight from the studio—in restoring to Miss Jones her former character of angel—in lamenting his own fate in having to go to a ball—and in thanking Heaven that she would have him go. “For,” argued Paolo, “if she did not care for me, what would it matter to her whether I was there or not?”

When, a day or two after, Paolo told Thornton that he was going to Torlonia's ball—he had secured a ticket by that time—Thornton made no objection; on the contrary, highly approved of it.

"Since nothing can open your eyes but sad experience," said the misanthrope, "no better opportunity than this for a beginning. A few hours spent with Miss Jones at a ball will give you more insight into her character than ten years of morning visits. There's nothing like a ball for showing female character; it draws the whole woman out. And then it is time you should get acquainted with your rival."

"My rival?" exclaimed the young man.

"Yes; with that terrible rival, who is everywhere and nowhere, who can goad you to madness, and yet cannot be called to account—the world."



CHAPTER II.


PAOLO SEES A GHOST.

PAOLO arrived early at the ball. Shy people, from their invincible repugnance to making their entrance under the fire of many eyes, are, as a rule, among the earliest arrivals at all assemblies. No wonder, then, at Paolo's being among Torlonia's first guests. He was too much of an artist not to be pleasantly struck by what was to him the novel and fairy-like *coup-d'œil* of the long suite of reception rooms—by their noble proportions, the richness and variety of their decorations, the floods of light from chandeliers of exquisite Venetian workmanship, the profusion of flowers and shrubs on all sides, with fountains refreshing to every sense, playing amid those mimic *parterres* and groves. His soul, too, was stirred by the occasional strains of inspiring music, for the nonce a vain appeal to absent dancers. These combined

influences, one and all, made his sensations for a time those of keen and unmixed enjoyment.

This pleasant state, however, did not last long. Unpalatable sights, such as are unavoidably met with in a large assembly at Rome, foreign uniforms, political opponents, political turncoats, Brutuses of yesterday turned into cardinal's courtiers of to-day, depressed his feelings, and roused his bile. "Well," thought he, to comfort himself, as a rebellious sigh would have its way, "I am not here for my own pleasure, but for hers;" and having nothing better to do, he went and made one of a large group of persons, standing in two compact rows in what he now perceived to be the principal entrance hall.

The fashionable crowd of which he formed one was composed almost exclusively of young men, most of them apparently foreigners to Italy; at least, not speaking her language, but French or English. The young Roman stood wondering what great personage was creating this expectation, when all conversation was hushed, and a general stir took place. Those who were before went further forward, those behind rose on the tips of their toes, stretched out their necks, and the short-sighted—astonishing the number of them—put up their eyeglasses, and in stepped in succession, first a stately



lady with a lovely girl on each arm; then an elderly, plump dame, and a withered old one, followed by two more young fresh girls; the rear brought up by a couple between two ages; and the whole of them, young, middle-aged, and old, making a greater display of natural charms than, according to Paolo's primitive notions, was consistent with good taste. Now Paolo understood what sort of attraction it was that kept that double living wall at the entrance hall, when he heard comments, bad enough when disparaging, worse still when laudatory—comments which made him blush to the roots of his hair for those poor unconscious ladies. He hastened away, sat himself down in a corner, and fell to musing.

Little by little the rooms began to fill—the double human stream that roamed to and fro in opposite directions grew thicker, and the renewed strains of the orchestra, together with the measured beat of feet in the distance, announced that the ball had begun in earnest. Still Paolo sat musing. A slight tap of a fan awoke him, so to say; he turned round, and there before him was Miss Jones, more beautiful than ever he had seen her, bare-shouldered, bare-armed, dazzling.

“Am I not very good to come and rouse you from your brown study? what are you thinking of?”

"Of nothing that you will care to hear," said Paolo, exchanging salutations with Mrs. Jones.

"But I do care," went on the radiant fairy; "I insist on knowing."

"I was thinking," replied Paolo, "on the beautiful moon, that is now shining without these walls."

"Were you? is there a moon to-night?"

"It was not probable you should notice it," observed Paolo.

"I did not, that's the truth."

"Does the idea of a ball abolish the rest of creation?" asked Paolo.

"Now, don't be moody and disagreeable," said the lady.

"Moody at a ball? who ever heard of such a thing? I am not such a fool," replied Paolo; "no, indeed, I intend to put on my best smiles, and go and pay my homage to their eminences—I saw three somewhere."

"Nonsense! come and join us soon," and the obstruction which had brought Miss Jones to a standstill close to Paolo being removed, she disappeared with her aunt into the next room.


Miss Jones had yielded to an impulse of good-nature, in thus accosting young Mancini, for which,

of course, she was afterwards called to account by Mr. Jones. It did her honour, though true it is, she had had only to stretch out her beautiful arm to reach him with her fan—only to lean over the back of one intervening chair, to be able to converse with him. She felt grateful for his being there, grateful for his wearing “straw-coloured” gloves, and rather grateful to him for his good looks. He, on his side, was far from insensible to either her kindliness or her beauty, and would assuredly have shown how warmly he felt both, but for a certain crotchet of his, which, whenever called into action, sent gentler feelings to the rightabout.

Miss Lavinia naturally wore a ball-dress, an ultra ball-dress—every one knows what that means—and Paolo, we are ashamed of him, and for him, had a special pet prejudice against low dresses, and plenty of trash ready in support of this prejudice. Now, the secret is revealed of all his shiftings and evasions, as to painting the young lady in a certain garb, and of his strangely reserved manner towards her on the day he was one of the Joneses’ dinner-party. The reader is entreated to bear in mind that we describe the feelings of a young savage. Paolo was utterly ignorant of the world and its ways; Paolo had never moved in the so-

called upper circles ; Paolo knew not that the higher you go in the social scale, the greater this sort of exhibition. Covering their shoulders is all very well for common people, for the wives and daughters of mechanics. This ignorance, and a strong disposition to jealousy, are the only excuses which we venture to offer in extenuation of this preposterous notion of his.

Paolo's mind was troubled "like a fountain stirred, and he himself saw not the bottom of it." He felt sorely out of his place, and if Miss Jones had not expressed the desire to be shown his fresco by himself, ten to one but he would have gone home and to bed. As it was, he wandered away in search of her, and at last found the young lady in a room, metamorphosed into a grove, and fancifully lighted by coloured lamps hanging from the branches of the trees. There was a crowd in this room, and it was suffocatingly hot. Miss Jones was dancing a quadrille, and Paolo, obliged to remain in the rear, saw only as much as the spectators in front of him would allow. No doubt of Lavinia being in her natural element—her happy smile, her lustrous eyes, her beaming countenance, told a tale of keen and intense enjoyment. Her partner, a thin, light-haired young man, with an



order on his breast, whether still or in motion, never slackened in his talk, and was most complacently listened to. Now and then some of his remarks produced a fit of half-suppressed laughter, as if she greatly enjoyed the joke, whatever it was. Paolo did not relish it half as much.

The lady who was the partner of Miss Jones's *vis-à-vis*, evidently divided with Lavinia the sceptre of queen of the ball, and the admiration of the public. But far from exciting any unkind feelings, this rivalry seemed to create a friendship, and to draw the beauties towards one another. Whenever the figure of the dance caused them to meet or join hands, there was no end to wreathed smiles, and becks, and gracious whispers—all of which was very pleasant to behold.

The appearance of this second lady was very remarkable. The character of her beauty, for beauty she had, was so strange and so dissimilar to that of the European type, that it required a practised connoisseur's eye to find it out, and even then some effort to acknowledge it; but once allowed, it exercised over you what was very like magnetic fascination. She was small and plump, but most harmoniously proportioned, had jetty black hair—uncommonly large and round-shaped, jetty black

eyes, with yellow streaks, and something of the feline phosphorescence in them—a nose a very little turned up, showing more of the rosy nostrils than a fastidious observer might have desired—a wide, well-shaped mouth, with an adorable dimple at each of its corners, brought into play at every moment by a winning smile, which served to exhibit a wonderful set of little teeth of dazzling whiteness. She wore a yellow dress with bouquets of black tulle, studded with emeralds, and in her raven hair, and on her violently displayed bosom, hung strings of oriental pearls, admirably assorting with and relieving her swarthy greenish complexion and the ink of her heavy tresses. Her style of dancing was as characteristic as her appearance. It had a *laissez aller*, with occasional starts of passion, in it, accompanied by *poses* of the head, wavings of the neck and arms, and undulations of the whole person, that might be found fault with, and declared out of place in a drawing-room; but which had all the softness, peculiarity, and attractiveness of the motions of a kitten. As to her ankles and feet—and thanks to the unfashionable shortness of her gown, every one had the benefit of them—they were unanimously pronounced unrivalled—the ankle and foot of a true Andalusian.

The quadrille did come to an end at last, and then Paolo made a desperate push to join Miss Jones ; but before he had elbowed half his way to her, there was the yellow lady seated by her side, and a thick wall of gentlemen of all ages surrounding and conversing with the two belles of the evening. Paolo, however, struggled on, so as to be near enough to avail himself of any opportunity that might offer, should Lavinia really wish for his services as cicerone. He doubted much that she remembered anything about his fresco. He looked in vain for either Mr. or Mrs. Jones, and then, naturally enough, his whole attention became concentrated on the group, of which Lavinia and the yellow lady were the admired centre. They held each other's hands, and seemed on such friendly and intimate terms, that Paolo could not but take it for granted that Pentesilea, or the cardinalessa—the yellow lady was no other than the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos—Paolo had identified her at a glance—well, Paolo could not but take it for granted, that she must be an old acquaintance of Miss Jones ; and if so, why had Miss Jones withheld the fact from him ? The marchioness was not the sort of woman with whom he would have desired that his English pupil should form an intimacy. Not that he gave more credence

than such reports usually deserve to the stories current about her ladyship; but he objected to her eccentric ways, and her habits of self-exhibition. He knew also, from what Clelia and Salvator said, that, if kind and generous, the marchioness was, beyond all allowable limits, wilful, thoughtless, and childish.

While Paolo was lost in disagreeable speculations, the music struck up again, couples took their places, and the waltz began. This time Lavinia's partner was remarkably tall, handsome, prepossessing in appearance, and, as a dancer, quite a match for the young lady. It was really a pleasure to watch the two elegant forms flying rapidly round the room, with the ease and lightness of thistle-down driven by a gentle breeze—a pleasure, that is, to all but Paolo. To him, on the contrary, the sight was gall and wormwood. Probably many another in his situation, even though more scantily gifted than our Roman with originality, might object to seeing the woman he loves twirling round a room in the arms of a fine fellow, her cheeks so close to his cheeks that their breaths must mingle, a stray curl of her hair perhaps brushing his lips, not to mention other aggravating circumstances. But in this, as in all other matters, tastes differ, no doubt; and who will venture on the

experiment of accounting for tastes? That of Paolo was, however, decidedly against this kind of sport; and had he had within his reach the inventor of the waltz, he would have made an example of him, for the guidance of other inventors. As it was, he had nothing for it but to fulminate curses—deep not loud—against him, as he stood with eyes riveted on the handsome pair, in mortal apprehension lest not only faces but lips might touch. One must be in love and jealous, to be pursued by any such ridiculous fears.

After the climax of the waltz, which in sight and sound resembles a humming-top, the music stopped, and Lavinia's cavalier reconducted her to a seat, thanked her, bowed low, and departed, and with him Paolo's incubus. He made a desperate rush forward and reached Miss Jones's side.

"Here you are at last," she said, panting for breath, and passing her cobweb handkerchief furtively over her face. "How very hot it is! shall I ever be cool again! Oh, my poor gloves, they are not fit to be seen."

"You had better not dance any more," said Paolo, innocently, "but amuse yourself with walking through the rooms."

"Not dance any more!" exclaimed the beauty,

loudly, and with a superb toss of her head. "Look," and she held up her tablets, "it is full; I am engaged for every dance."

Paolo involuntarily recoiled. The tones, gestures, looks were those of a person drunk—drunk with excitement. Her countenance reminded him of that of a Bacchante he had copied over and over again while he was at the drawing academy, and which had haunted him day and night at the time. He listened, struck dumb and torpid as one in a dream. The return of the yellow lady, and other strangers, who clustered round Miss Jones, roused him from his trance; he bowed and retired. In doing so, he met Mr. and Mrs. Jones coming in search of their niece. Mrs. Jones stopped him, asking if he were ill, he looked so pale.

"Nothing but the heat," answered Paolo.

The lady complained of heat likewise, and they parted.

"Poor fool that thou art!" thought Paolo to himself, as he elbowed his way out of the crowd, "she thinks no more of thee or thy fresco than of the first pair of shoes she ever wore. She thinks of dancing, and she is right. For what do people come to a ball if not for dancing? The greater ass to be here, I who do not dance. If ever——"

The thread of his thoughts or resolves was here violently snapped by a sharp touch on his shoulder. He turned, and found himself face to face with the so-styled Du Genre, his French friend and fellow painter.

"Ah, ah! you are humanizing yourself at last," said the Frenchman.

"Am I?" asked Paolo: "my opinion is that I am brutifying myself."

"Always caustic," observed Du Genre. "Eh bien! how goes it with the ideal?"

"Stified under these mountains of matter."

"Farceur! it is a charming fête: what dresses! what women!"

"The dresses are faded, the women puppets, the fête a bedlam. I protest that any one who is pleased with what he sees here is either crazy, or a student of the nude."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Du Genre, "I see now where the shoe pinches, you puritan. You would have young ladies with beautiful transparent skins put them under lock and key."

"And where would be the harm, if they did?" returned Paolo. "Ought a woman of flesh and blood to be exhibited like a statue or a picture, that we may admire the delicacy of that curve, or the fine effect of that tint?"

“ And the public, barbarian—the public—are they not to be considered ? ”

“ Ah ! the public,” sneered Paolo. “ Yes, you are right,—I forgot the claims of society. You have converted me. Good night.” And he hurried away, repeating to himself, “ In fact, why should the public not have their part ? It is the public that awards the prizes, therefore it is but just and fair the public should have the means of judging. Fie on husbands and lovers. What right have they to confiscate the share of the public ? Down with all such monopoly ; little fear of it, after all. As far as I can see, love seems to be a very accommodating affair. But mine is not. Mine is the love of a miser. I must have my treasure all to myself—down to the uttermost farthing. I am jealous of the very air surrounding her. Only to see her dance with another made me suffer martyrdom. Why am I thus ? Why am I not like others ? Am I wrong, or mad, or what ? At all events, I have had enough of balls, and of yellow gloves, too,” and so thinking, he tore them off, and sent what was now very unlike a pair of ball gloves, spinning along the marble hall.

CHAPTER III.

THORNTON TELLS A TALE.

THE clocks of the Eternal City were tolling twelve as the heated young man issued into the street, and the slow strokes fell on the still night like a solemn warning. The moon was riding high in the unclouded sky, the air was cool and pleasant to fevered brows, the silence and solitude sweet to a swelling, overcharged heart. As Paolo walked along, his excitement insensibly subsided under the soothing influences of the hour, and dwindled into a profound discouragement, into one of those heavy, poignant, supreme depressions, not unfrequently the lot of passionate natures, and under the tyranny of which life seems an unbearable burden. In this dejected humour, he reached Via Babuino. A tall shadow was flitting to and fro before the house in which Paolo lived. It was Thornton.

“I knew you would not be late,” said the English-

man, "and so I have been on the look out for you. Is it the light of the moon which makes you look so pale, or have you seen a ghost?"

"The one and the other," returned Paolo; "but spare me just now."

"I am not the one to bruise the broken reed," muttered Thornton. "Paolo, I may have used the goad to make my friend turn from a precipice; but once he has taken the plunge, and lies wounded, I would handle him as tenderly as a babe. All affliction is sacred to me." Then Thornton added, in a lighter tone, "Come now to my room, and let us have a chat and a glass of punch."

"Thank you," said Paolo, "I am neither inclined to talk nor drink. I will go to bed."

"To toss about, and fret, and bite your pillows to stifle your groans. I have known such nights. No, Paolo; come with me; we shall not talk. Come, my son."

A father could not have said "my son" more tenderly. Every feature in the speaker's fine countenance was expressive of gentle and considerate sympathy. The young Roman, easily conquered, followed to his friend's apartment, and once in the familiar room, stretched himself out on a sofa, while Thornton, before a table on which was the ready

prepared punch, applied a lighted match to the spirits, and stood there stirring and exciting the blue flames to greater and more wizard activity.

"An image of that short fever yclept life," said Thornton, gravely, as the last forked, fiery tongue, after much wavering, flickering, paling, at length died out.

"It might be so full and happy, though!" sighed Paolo.

"Full,—yes, to a certain extent, if we were wise," said the Englishman; "but happy, I much doubt. Happiness is less an affair of circumstances than of temperament. Many are happy with the best reasons for being quite the contrary, and *vice versâ*. There are in the world, luckily, but a very limited number to whom nature has forgotten to give the buffers and soothers with which the majority are provided to protect them against too rough collisions. Hence the disagreeable shocks this minority of ill-constituted mortals receive, where the others receive none, or perhaps even agreeable impressions. The former are like swimmers against the current, or like guests at a banquet whose stomachs are at fault with the viands before them. Such are never satisfied with an approximation, but like Balzac's Flemish alchymist, pursue that which they can never reach

—the absolute, in politics, in morals, in art, in love, in everything. For such as these happiness is out of the question; quiet and peace they may enjoy, so long as they keep out of the paths of the world. This is thy lot and mine, my poor friend.”

“I revolt against it, then!” cried Paolo; “I scorn your peace and quiet; I will and must be happy. A man worthy the name of a man ought not to mope and despond when he can act. I know what hurt me, and no later than to-day she shall hear it from me.”

“Hear what, my poor boy? that her dancing with another drives Paolo Mancini frantic, and that therefore she must give it up? Even if she would, she could not. Her uncle and aunt, her friends, the world, would misconstrue the renunciation. Hear that her ball-dress is objectionable in your eyes? If she would, she could not alter the style of it. It is the *costume de rigueur* on such occasions; or hear that you find fault with her looking pleased and excited at the admiration she inspires? Don’t find fault with *her*; find fault with human nature, or rather with yourself. You cannot make her responsible for your peculiar manner of seeing and feeling.”

“You lay your finger on each of my wounds,”

said Paolo, in surprise; "you read my heart as if it were an open book."

"I once knew a young man who passed through similar phases, and who described his sensations to me," explained Mortimer. "Youth, fortune, good looks, a kindly disposition, great moderation of desires—he had all, you would have said, which ought by right to secure happiness. But he had none of those inestimable softeners which, as I said before, ward off through life all violent concussions or falls. The world disagreed with that youth, and he with the world. He was wise enough to turn his back upon it, and seek contentment in the solitude of a country life. Here he had a dream. He dreamt of a girl as lovely as the roses she tended in her garden, as true as the nature which encircled her, as ignorant of the world and its ways as if no such thing existed. Indeed, they did not as yet exist for her. Here I am safe, thought the imprudent, youthful sage; and he let his heart grow to her, let every hope and wish coil round her. The dream lasted for a twelvemonth. It vanished at a county ball—her first ball."

Mortimer, half choked with emotion, swallowed his glass of punch almost at a gulp, and after a little he went on,—

“He saw her leaning on strangers’ arms, complacently listening to and smiling upon strangers, forgetful of everything, himself included, in the excitement of the moment. A young officer, the son of a nobleman, paid her particular attention, and to see the deference and eagerness with which she marked her sense of the honour, one would have said she had as much faith in the saving grace of the peerage as in that of the Bible. My friend felt as you felt not long ago. That terrible rival, from which he had thought himself secure with her, the world, on a sudden stood between him and her—nay, supplanted him. His whole moral being was shaken to its foundations. She did not notice his agitated looks; she had no eyes but for the admiration bestowed upon her. The young man thought to himself as you did at the ball—said as you did just now, ‘This shall not be again; I will remonstrate with her.’ But when he tried to do this, she did not understand him, and asked, ‘What have I done?’ This question closed his mouth. In fact, what had she done but indulge in an amusement pronounced innocent by society, and as such entered into by most respectable ladies, both married and unmarried. What had she done, poor child, but acknowledge and be flattered by the condescension of one of those,

the world, her world, recognizes as its betters? What right had he to visit on her unoffending head what, after all, was nothing but the sin of his own faulty organization? He felt ashamed of himself, and held his peace."

Thornton drained his glass again, and then proceeded with increased animation,—

"A ball, like a misfortune, never comes alone. This one was to be followed by races, then dinners, and the inevitable complement of races and dinners—more dancing. Well, my young fool was fool enough to imagine that she might make him a sacrifice of this new ball, and he wrote accordingly. The answer was, that his request could not be complied with. She was engaged to go, and what would the world say if she did not? And go she did. He saw her go in with his own eyes. It is but fair to say, that the young lady was on a visit to an aunt, who doted on all kinds of gay crowds, doted also on those ornaments of county-town ball-rooms, officers—yes, the town had the blessing of a garrison. The aunt hated a quiet evening at home—she was born for society, she said. We fools call that species of woman worldly, but the wise, whose company she so sedulously grappled at, spoke of her as a pleasant, companionable woman."

"Well, was I to be laid on the rack again? Yes; I—" continued Mortimer, as Paolo suddenly sat bolt upright with amazement—"yes, it is the follies and sins of my own youth, that I am relating to you. Do what I would, I could no longer endure the boiling hell of my own feelings. I could no more change her nature than my own. I could spoil her life, as well as mine; that was all I could do. Better part. I wrote her a letter, a long letter. Every syllable that I penned drew blood from my heart. What I said, I don't know; not a word in wrath, many in love, and humility, and self-accusation. I laid bare before her every fold of my inner being, as fully and unreservedly as if I had been before my God. I entreated, implored her pardon, humbly and earnestly. This letter I sent to her from London. Ten days after that, I was in New York. I have never since set foot in England again."

"It was an extreme resolution to come to," observed Paolo. "And she, what did she say or do?"

"Of that I am ignorant. From that time to this, I have never heard of or from her. No one had my address but my solicitors, and I left instructions with them to communicate with me solely on busi-

ness, and to destroy any letters that might be sent to them for me."

"That was hard—seems almost cruel. I am sure she wrote, and hoped on for long; how do you know but that your unrelenting silence broke her heart?"

"Don't say I broke her heart," burst forth Mortimer, with frightful vehemence; "don't say it, or you will drive me mad. Say that I was right; that what I did was best for her; that I could not have done otherwise; or, better still, say that women never break their hearts, so long as there exist such things as fashions, lordlings, and balls."

Mortimer shook from head to foot as he spoke, and his fine countenance grew haggard and livid.

Startled, nay, almost scared, by this passionate outburst of feeling, so unlike his friend's constant habit of self-control, which amounted in general to passiveness, Paolo remained silently watching Thornton, as he walked the room backwards and forwards, quiet enough now. The noble form grew gradually indistinct, until it completely vanished from eyes closed in slumber.

Paolo spent the best part of the following morning in meditating on the shape in which to clothe the strictures he intended to offer to Miss Lavinia, on the subject of balls, partners, &c. It was a difficult

problem he had set himself—to find words exempt at the same time from vagueness, quite unmistakable in meaning, and yet measured in so nice a balance that they could give no offence. But not for this was there any wavering in his resolves; and had there been, Mortimer's strange revelations would have supplied an additional spur. "God forbid," thought the young lover, "that by any fault of omission on my side, things should come to a like pass between her and me. I owe it to her, not less than to myself, to be candid and open." We don't know if he solved the problem to his satisfaction; certain it is, that his ability and industry were defeated by an unforeseen circumstance.

Mrs. Jones, who had gone to the ball feeling far from well, was suddenly taken ill on her return home. Her attack of asthma was so unusually violent, that every one near her apprehended immediate suffocation. Physicians were called in one after the other, and all the resources of science evoked, with, for a time, but little result. Towards morning, however, she was somewhat relieved, but, from the state of exhaustion, still considered in danger. Paolo was told this from the lips of Miss Lavinia herself, when he called at Palazzo Morlacchi, and, oh! with what agony of look, what wringing of hands, and

floods of tears! How could he have lectured her at such a moment? besides, he had no time, for poor Lavinia was far too impatient to return to the side of the sick bed, to linger one unnecessary second with any one; and had she done so, Paolo, to tell the truth, was far more likely to have fallen at her feet in a transport of pity and admiration, than to have sermonized her. The light in which he now saw her, banished for the time all disagreeable shades. A heart full of such an argosy of affection was the best security against any momentary flights of the head. An appeal to that heart was sure, at any time, to elicit all the good in it. So reasoned Paolo.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS LAVINIA'S DIARY.

“DEAR LADY AUGUSTA,

“Since my last, I have had a great terror, and a great joy, and to whom but you, dearest of friends, can I confide my joys and sorrows, with entire certainty of their being shared and sympathized with? The night before last, on our return from a ball at Torlonia's, aunt was taken ill, frightfully ill, threatened with suffocation; actually black in the face, and with scarcely any pulse. Oh! the horror of those hours! How is it that one's heart does not break with such suffering? Thank God—oh! thank God, I can now speak of it as past. Since yesterday, the improvement has been so rapid and steady, that the physicians themselves are surprised, and to-morrow, if the weather be fine, she is to be permitted to take a drive on the Pincio. I feel so light-hearted, so happy, that I can scarcely

sit still to write. I feel a longing to get up, and dance by myself. What a child I am, after all!

“Now that the danger is over—yes, really over—I can remember what went before, and which, even while it was being played out, I was thinking I should relate to you; it is so delightful to have some one that likes to hear all one has to tell about oneself. Well, but I am not going to write about the ball; no, you have had a surfeit of such things; but, about—about a charming conquest I have made. ‘Oh! the fickle monkey,’ I hear you say, wearing your gravest look; ‘a conquest after ——’ Never fear; this victory will give umbrage to no one, for my conquest is only a—woman. But *such* a woman! dark as night, restless as quicksilver, passionate, like the thorough creole she is, fond of riding, driving, shooting, dancing, singing, and doing each to perfection; and such an adorable way of dressing into the bargain; in short, the very companion for me. She introduced herself—I ought to say declared her love at first sight, so warm and affectionate was the language of her introduction. She pronounced me a nonsuch of beauty, begged my friendship, brought half Rome, I believe, to my shrine, would only dance in the quadrille where I danced, and remained by my side till the end of the ball;

in a word, there could not be a more ardent courtship from man to woman, than that of this fascinating woman to me; and I, also, have taken an immense fancy to her. I have told you everything I know of my beauty, except her name. Here it is: Juanita Florez Virginia, Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos. Hers is one of the oldest families in Cuba. Her husband, moreover, is a Grandee of Old Spain, and ambassador somewhere, and his younger brother, Conde de la Terra, *chaperons* her. She called on us the day after the ball, as she had promised, but aunt was at the worst, and I could only stay a few instants with her. Uncle was at home, and Count Fortiguerra with him. Mr. Jones, I could see, was not sorry, and, sooth to say, no more was I, that the first person she met in our house, should be a nobleman. If her servants came once during that day to inquire for aunt, I am positive they came twenty times. She called herself again yesterday, and is to be here to-day. We are all to go and spend a day at Villa Torralba, where she resides, to get acquainted with one another, as the marchioness says. The marchioness! she won't hear of my giving her any title, but insists on my calling her Juanita. She is all impatience to show me her villa, her grounds, her horses, her theatre (it

seems she has got one), and to have me quite to herself, that is her own expression.

* * * * *

“Fully eleven days since I scribbled the above, and I have not had one spare hour, not a spare minute, to devote to my diary. No heroine of a fashionable novel in the height of the season was ever more beleaguered with engagements than I have been during these eleven days. Life is a race, indeed, under the leadership of this fiery creole. A whirlwind, a hurricane, are the only appropriate similes for her activity of mind and body. She can ride or drive for hours, pay a dozen visits, entertain some thirty guests at dinner, and dance till morning, without betraying the least fatigue, and without any flagging of her spirits. Her nerves must be what people call iron nerves. That she has an iron wrist, I for one can vouch, as any one can who has seen her driving her pair of wonderful ponies—regular little demons—or riding Achmet, her Arab, who is as fiery and untameable as herself. We rush along at the rate of a mail-train behind its time, and I own that I do occasionally find it a little too much. Her love for me has become a sort of *furor*. Since I sang to her, Grisi, Alboni, and Jenny Lind, my lovely Spaniard says, are not worthy to unlatch my

shoes. She will grant me neither peace nor truce, she protests, until I promise to sing in the opera which she means to give at her theatre. I do not think I shall comply; the idea of being on any stage and acting before an audience, however private the one and select the other, has something in it very repugnant to my feelings, and you know I am no prude. However we shall see. Señora Juanita, moreover, declares she cannot live without me, and it would seem so, for we are almost always together. We have had a morning concert, and dined twice at Villa Torralba. Aunt is so nearly well that she came to dinner, but drove home early in the evening. They dined with us on Monday. *They* stands for the marchioness and the Conde; and I leave it to your imagination to decide on what were the amount of Mr. Jones's exertions to secure the finest of fine people to meet them. Count Fortiguerra figured at the head of the list. By the by, Juanita has taken a great fancy to him. On Tuesday I went with her and uncle to Lady Hamilton's tea, on Wednesday to Princess Sgrozanoff's *soirée dansante*, on Thursday to Marchesa Saffioli's *conversazione*, on Friday to an *Accademia d'Improvvisazione*, on Saturday to the ball at the French Embassy. I believe every foreigner or native of any note have been introduced

to me. I am fast becoming the rage here, and no wonder, when my Juanita, who evidently gives or takes away one's right to be considered fashionable and one of the *beau monde*, does nothing but rave of my perfections to every creature she sees.


* * * * *

“ Another week gone—really, no time to breathe. But I must tell you about our races, or rather my races. You must know that from the first moment of our becoming acquainted, she thought of getting up some races in imitation of our English ones. She dotes on bull-fights, and would have managed to have had one a month ago, but, as she confided to me, the Pope dissuaded her ; so, as I said, as soon as she knew me, she determined to have races à l'Anglaise in my honour ; and they took place yesterday, and were the *bonne bouche* of all our gaieties. The place of rendezvous was the tomb of Cecilia Metella, and two hundred persons congregated there by special invitation ; the number of those present non-invited was legion. Almost all of us were in red, we ladies in red jackets, and the men in red coats. The marchioness generally rides and drives in a red jacket, and I have had one made off her pattern, and it suits me uncommonly well. We had only gentlemen riders. There were twenty-one English, a

Russian or two, and one Roman—not a Roman, I believe, but at all events an Italian—that very Prince of Rocca-Ginestra, whose turn-out I so much admired some time ago, and about whom Signor Mancini made such a fuss. The whole thing went off capitally, and but for the horses, poor specimens in general, one might have imagined oneself on an English raceground. There was the same eating, drinking, and flirting in the carriages, the same fire of small talk and wit, the same mountebanks striving for money; everything but the horses—oh, yes, and but the sky—was like a scene in our dear country. The greater number of the invited went afterwards to Villa Torralba, and then we danced, and supped, and danced again, till dawn of the next morning. It was hard work for the queen of the fête, Lavinia Jones, for my royalty of an hour entailed presentations and compliments without end—such compliments! we English don't shine in that line: it was enough to have worn out the strongest Samson in petticoats. Among the most enthusiastic of my subjects were uncle and Count Fortiguerra, both unmis-takeably tipsy.

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“A disagreeable complication. I had written so far yesterday, when my Spanish Will-o'-the-wisp



came playing round me, and whisked me away to Villa Torralba. I stipulated for a quiet day, and a comparatively quiet day we had—a drive of two hours, and an hour's practising in the shooting-gallery. *Nota Bene*—I am fast becoming an excellent pistol-shot. The rest of the day was spent indoors, most of it in the theatre. A diminutive young man, all in black like a doctor or clergyman, and a strikingly handsome girl, were superintending the rehearsal of the choruses. The girl, called Clelia, and only a dressmaker, went through her task with a calm dignity which might have suited an empress; the small man in black, on the contrary, did his part with a zest and a funny *bonhomie*, which sent every one present, even the queenly girl herself, into fits of laughter. He is a scene-painter of tolerable repute, and Clelia is his affianced bride. I have never mentioned my rivals in the marchioness's love—her dogs. She has some of every kind in the world, I believe, and attends to them just as if they were babies; gets frightened at their least indisposition; in short, pets them more than any reasonable woman would or should do. One of these favourites was ailing, and so away went the marchioness every five minutes to visit the interesting patient. I don't know what possessed me, but during

one of these absences, I asked the droll little painter if he knew Signor Mancini. ‘*Altro !* Signor Mancini was like a brother to him,’ was the answer, his eyes and those of his handsome companion brightening marvellously at the sound of the name ; and hereupon followed a glowing panegyric of Signor Paolo, as artist, friend, and man. Clelia added her warm assent to every word. Juanita, happening to return while the little man was still declaiming on this subject, with her usual inquisitiveness insisted on being told how I came to know Signor Paolo, what he was like, what was his profession, &c. &c. And I, yielding, I hope, less to the promptings of *amour-propre* than to a wish to do Signor Paolo a service by interesting a person of the marchioness’s rank and wealth in his behalf, told her how kindly he had directed me in my painting, and also—here is what I think was perhaps unwise—of the portrait he had taken of me, and which was all but finished. No sooner had I said this, than impetuous Juanita declared she must and would see my picture at once, and that she would have her own taken ; and was for setting off immediately to have her first sitting. You may imagine my dismay, knowing Signor Mancini’s ways so well. It was all I could do to persuade her to delay her visit to the studio in Via Frattina,

by making her remember the hour of the day, and how much too late it would be by the time we reached Rome. So, at last, she gave up the point, and the visit is to take place to-day.

“The truth is, I wanted a little time to consider whether I had not better write and prepare him for this call, and urge him to comply with the marchioness’s request, or whether I would trust to the chapter of accidents. Upon reflection, I think this will be my best course. Signor Paolo is very shy, and at this moment I have more reliance on his shyness than on his good-will. The great point is to get at him, and if he were forewarned, he is just the man to shut himself up in that atelier of his, and be stone deaf to bell and knocker. You wonder at *my* having any such anticipation, don’t you? Ah! but Signor Paolo is angry with me, and not quite without cause. I will not pretend not to be aware that I have treated him rather cavalierly; at least, apparently so, during my last gaieties. He called twice—once in the morning, just as I was going to a concert at Villa Torralba, and again one evening, at the very moment I was getting into the carriage to go to a ball. Of course, he looked disappointed and vexed. The worst of the business is, that on both occasions, wishing to console him, I made an

appointment for a sitting on the morrow, and I *was* very naughty—I kept neither. He has never been near me since. The last time I saw him was the day of the races; it was in the Corso, and I was in the marchioness's barouche, dressed in my red jacket. I caught his eye, and felt that I coloured; I am sure I don't know why, for, after all, there is no sin in wearing scarlet—red shawls are common enough; however, he looked as black as thunder as he turned away.


* * * *

“What an inexplicable riddle the human heart is! we cannot even read and understand our own; for, do we not often, under some of its momentary impulses, feel, act, speak, in a way, which, had it been prophesied to us but an hour before, we should have laughed at, and spurned the notion of with indignation? I remember hearing an author of some fame one day decline all compliments about his books, affirming that not he, but a *homunculus* within him, had written them, always without his knowledge, not unfrequently against his will. I suppose I have some such sort of an imp, a *feminula*, for whose sayings and doings I, the woman, am not responsible. What is all this preamble to lead to? you ask. To preparing you, my dear, for some-

thing very extraordinary. But I must begin at the beginning.

We went yesterday, Juanita and I, as we had agreed, to Signor Mancini's studio. He was there, not, as usual, painting, but writing. I have no words to tell you how his altered appearance shocked me; ghastly pale, with sunken cheeks, blood-shot eyes, he was the mere shadow of his former self. 'Would he be so kind,' I asked, 'as to allow my friend, the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos, to see my portrait?' and glancing round, to see where it was, fancy my surprise at discovering that all the easels were vacant, and what appeared to be a roll of canvas in a corner of the room. A flush spread over his face as he stammered out that my portrait had met with an accident, had fallen, in fact, and been so injured that he had sent it to have the canvas repaired. I saw perfectly well that he was telling a fib, but why? I observed aloud, while I silently wondered what had really become of my picture, that I particularly regretted the circumstance, as my friend, had she been satisfied with my likeness, as I was certain she would have been, had determined to ask him to take one of her, if his occupation—I was going to add, would permit, but he gave me no time, saying hurriedly, that being on the eve

of leaving Rome for change of air, he could make no engagements of any sort for the present. This was principally addressed to the marchioness, for he avoided looking at me as much as he decently could. I here remarked, that I hoped he was not going farther than Tivoli, or Frascati. 'Exactly,' answered he; 'to Tivoli, or Frascati, or—I have not made up my mind as to where yet.' 'Not to be away long?' I hoped. 'Oh, no! not long; for a little while.' Again I felt sure that he was deceiving me, and a mortal uneasiness lest he should be going away for ever stole over me. All at once I felt what it would be to me if I lost him. I had been a wretched fool, a wicked fool. I had neglected him, the best, the truest, the most devoted, because—I can't write it, it is too mean. My whole soul was clinging to him with the energy of despair, and yet, there I must stand, and chatter words of course. I did love him, yes, I did; and he was leaving me! I followed the marchioness downstairs with some wild idea of telling her everything and going back to him. I had actually reached the carriage, but it would not do. I told her I had dropped one of my bracelets, and, without waiting for any answer, I rushed up the stairs again into the studio. He had been pacing the room, and had his



back to the door as I lifted the latch. When he saw me, he stood transfixed. I went up to him, and said,—

“ ‘I have but a minute; what have you done with my picture?’ ”

“ ‘Tore it to pieces with my own hands.’ ”

“ ‘And where are you going?’ ”

“ ‘To Paris.’ ”

“ ‘When do you start?’ ”

“ ‘This evening at eight o'clock.’ ”

“ ‘You shall not go.’ ”

“ ‘I shall, and will.’ ”

“ ‘If you are a man, you will not desert—those who love you.’ ”

“ ‘Who loves me?’ ”

“ ‘I do; yes, with all my heart. Will you go or stay?’ ”

“ He hesitated a second, then said,—

“ ‘I stay.’ ”

“ I held out my hand; he fell at my feet, pressed it to his heart—to his lips—and then I ran away.

“ And now to explain my preamble, and I have done. I suppose it to be in human nature, that the value we set on anything increases with the chances of its being lost, and diminishes with those of its being restored to us. What is very certain is, that

yesterday I thought in the heat of pursuit no sacrifice too great to save me from a threatened loss, and to-day—shall I say it or not?—to-day, after four and twenty hours of security, I look back upon the price I paid for my possession, not exactly with regret, but with a wonder that is very akin to regret. Who can fathom this mystery for me? who explain this contradiction? Is it but the momentary reaction which follows a fit of fever, or am I influenced, unknown to myself, by the bitter remarks of the marchioness, who took quite an aversion to him? I know it is one of my faults to attach an undue weight to the opinion of others. I must try and correct myself of this; it will otherwise prove a bar to any steadiness of purpose.

“I have made another observation as to myself and Signor Paolo, one which greatly puzzles me. His power over me is great; too great when he is present, too little when out of sight. I really believe he magnetizes me. Laugh if you like, but I do think so. I am full of other fancies and misgivings; he has lately grown so unmanageable; it is true I have given him cause of offence. I neglected, indeed, slighted him. I will be on my good behaviour for the future. It is partly his fault also. Why can't he go into society, and dance, and

do like the rest of the world? then we should meet oftener, and he would be better satisfied, and so should I. Ah, me! I feel thunder in the air; the storm will burst when he hears that I am going to be one of the performers in the marchioness's theatricals, and, worse still, that I am to sing with his *bête noire*, the Prince of Rocca Ginestra. The marchioness, supported by uncle and even aunt, pressed me so hard on that unlucky day of the races, that they wrenched from me a promise—an unwilling promise, I declare. To draw back now is perfectly out of the question. What reason could I give, as I dare not give the real ones? I must trust a good deal to lucky chances, and a little to dissimulation. I begin to wish I had never come to Rome; he is *capable* of killing me, he is indeed. A famous *dénouement* for a novel. Few men in real life love enough for the attempt. You will abuse me for being romantic, but there is something flattering in being loved so ferociously."

CHAPTER V.

A STORMY TRUCE.

THE *entente cordiale* which followed the treaty of peace concluded between Paolo and Miss Jones was, as may be easily foreseen, but of short duration. As but too often happens in treaties involving far greater interests, and most carefully worded, each of our contracting powers had a particular *bonâ fide* interpretation of their tacit agreement, at perfect variance and clashing with the interpretation of the other. Rare it is, indeed, that, under such circumstances, what was to cement peace should not beget war. At any rate, it was a consequence which did not fail on the present occasion. Let us, for the sake of a clear understanding of the *casus belli*, define, as concisely as possible, the two conflicting versions of the treaty, and the rival pretensions to which it gave birth.

To make amends to Signor Paolo for her late

neglect, and to regulate her behaviour towards him for the future, so as not to afford him a pretext for any complaint of want of proper attention on her part; such and no other was to be, would Miss Jones have explained, had she been called on to do so, the practical and tangible result of her impetuous seeking after a reconciliation. Therefore, as long as she allowed of his visits at her own house, which she conscientiously did on certain fixed days and hours, and showed him a friendly and smiling countenance, Lavinia believed herself, with the best faith, to be within the letter and spirit of her compact. Of altering her general mode of life in what it might displease him, she had never dreamed, and could not dream, ignorant as she was as to how that fashion of life offended him.

But far wider and more comprehensive was Signor Paolo's view of their convention. His construction of it was, that Miss Jones, by suing for peace, had naturally engaged herself to satisfy *all* the exigencies—reasonable in his eyes—of an accepted suitor, and a non-compliance with which had been the cause of the rupture between them; for, argued Paolo, if she loves me—and loves me she does, or she would certainly not have said that she did—if she loves me, then it must be a real pleasure for her to humour

me in notions, which, after all, go far to prove the depth and exclusiveness of my love. My ways may seem peculiar to her; but she knew them, and if, knowing them, she nevertheless sought me, what could she mean but that she takes me such as I am, good, bad, or indifferent?

As the reader sees, Paolo was a long way off from his lyrical rhapsodies and ecstatic feelings of a few weeks ago, when to kiss the spot hallowed by the soles of her feet had sufficed to content him. He was less discreet now, less trustful; but at that period she was a goddess, at this, only a woman. How so? That great wizard, suffering, had brought about the transformation. Through sleepless nights with racking brain, through mad longings for death, and curses on his aching heart, a knowledge of reality had grown fast, and enlightened even dreamy Paolo; and he came forth from the fiery ordeal with bruised body and soul, minus the freshest leaf of his garland of illusions, plus a shred from experience, that hypocrite whose real name is distrust.

The interrupted drawing lessons were then resumed twice a week, but the drawing-master had little joy of them. Miss Jones, in the full conviction that she was fulfilling every duty towards Paolo, pursued with a light heart her course of gaiety; nay, as every

day was marked by a new acquaintance, she fluttered more wildly from one dissipation to another. She was never even conscious of the interruptions and curtailments of the time destined for Paolo. Scarcely had he ever her undivided attention; it was either a visitor in the drawing-room, whom she must run and see, or the dress-maker, or the singing-master, or a note to answer. Ah! these notes—these scented, varicoloured, fantastically folded notes—how abhorrent they were to Paolo: they proved the bane of his life. Innocent as most of them were of any meaning—those which had some conveying no more interesting intelligence than the address of a milliner, the lines quoted at last night's ball from Tennyson, or the introducing a sonata or song to the belle of the moment; poetry and music alike fated to remain unread, unplayed, unsung, from the want of time—innocent, we say, as these notes were, they had each and all a perfume of love about them which furiously irritated the nerves of the young Roman.

Worse still when master and pupil had a quiet hour, and Lavinia told how her time had been taken up in the interval between one lesson and the other, and expatiated on the topics filling her thoughts—the ball that had been, and the one that was to be, at which H. M. Lewis of Bavaria was expected to

be present ; her dress, and the notice and admiration it excited ; the marked attention paid her by his Grace, or his Excellency, and so on. She did not perceive, nor care to perceive, what gall and worm-wood all this was to Paolo. Once entered on the chapter of gratified vanity, the cleverest and kindest-hearted of girls can prove herself blind and cruel. No wonder that to Paolo, one of the uninitiated, such a life of self-exhibition as was here detailed to him, such a reckless pursuit of excitement, such utter dethronement of the spiritual part of our nature, should seem something empty, frivolous, absurd ; more suited to a peacock, whose business is the display of its tail, than to a rational, responsible creature, endowed with heart and mind, and an immortal soul.

And Paolo said this one day, said it plainly and bluntly. The young lady winced greatly, and accused him of grudging her the natural amusements of her age. Not at all, affirmed the lover ; he objected not to the glass of wine, but the half-dozen bottles, which brought forth drunkenness. " Was life a polka," he asked, " that we should go through it dancing ? " " Was life a funeral," retorted she, " that we ought to walk through it mourning ? "

" Far from it," was the reply, " but life has duties

the fulfilment of which involves responsibilities, and ought therefore to be reflected on seriously."

"I should like to know what great good you are doing with your gravity?" asked Miss Jones.

"Very little, truly, but at all events I labour, and earn my daily bread, as a poor man ought to do, striving to keep myself in the right frame of mind and body for the day that will come, when I shall find more genial and earnest employment in behalf of my country."

After a moment's pause, Lavinia said,—

"Men have left us women nothing in the way of work but the honour of mending our husband's and children's stockings. When my time comes, I hope I shall perform that duty as well as my neighbours. In the meanwhile I shall amuse myself, seeing that I commit no crime in so doing. I have no genius for reforming the world; I have no country to regenerate."

"Lucky that you have not," returned Paolo, bitterly; "it is admirable in you to sneer at the most sacred feelings—feelings you ought to honour—you, born in a free land."

Lavinia's heart smote her; she tried to apologize, and burst into tears. Paolo could not bear to see her cry, and in his turn implored forgiveness for

his harshness. A few kind words on both sides once more patched up a truce, which lasted as long as it could.

The Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos was the lovers' next apple of discord. Paolo declared his disapproval of Lavinia's intimacy with her ladyship in particularly strong terms. Lavinia defended her friend with a warmth worthy a better cause.

The marchioness objectionable? A person must be difficult to satisfy indeed, who thought so. Nobody did. Nobody took amiss the marquis's indefinite absence on his foreign embassy, or the marked assiduities of this or that nobleman. Nobody had ever thought twice about a report of a ghost—the ghost of poor Manuelito, said the servants at Villa Torralba—which had haunted the gardens for some nights, and which somebody, so it was said, had watched and caught, and discovered to be a prince, who, in a state of somnambulism, had mistaken the Villa Torralba for his palace in Piazza What's-its-name. Nobody had ever thought of impeaching the marchioness's reputation on such preposterous grounds. Had not the marchioness pedigree and money enough to be above suspicion or objection? Cardinals called at her house; the *crème de la crème*, both foreign and indigenous, flocked to her dinners

and parties; the most *comme il faut* persons declared themselves honoured by her notice. Truth to say, this took place on the Continent, and morals are so loose on the Continent, in Italy especially, and in Rome in a superlative degree. There is but one country in the world, which shall not be named, where you may be as noble as the Emperor of China, as rich as Croesus, as splendid as Sardanapalus, but if you have a spot as large as a pin, the shadow of a blemish on your propriety, nobody will look your way, not even a dog will offer you its paw. But at Rome!——

And yet Paolo objected to her. Lavinia asked innocently what could Signor Paolo see to find fault with in the marchioness, unless it was her title? She knew he disliked titles. Paolo did not care whether the lady had one or not; he objected to her eccentric and unfeminine habits, to her driving and shooting, to her manners, to her rage for exhibiting herself in every haunt of dissipation. A woman who courted public attention as the marchioness did, was no fit companion for a young and modest girl.

Miss Jones treated these notions with the most superb disdain. They were the notions of a savage, and not those of a civilized being. If such ways

were those of civilized life, Paolo gloried in being a savage.

"Are women born actresses," cried the irate young man, "that they must be for ever parading on the boards of a stage, a spectacle for any public?"

"Are women born nuns and Sisters of Charity," cried Lavinia, "that they must cut their hair, wear sackcloth, and bury themselves alive?"

"It would fare better with many of them if they did," quoth the Roman; "if they did no good, they would do no harm, at least."

"That is a matter of opinion; for my part, I find the world very well as it is, and I have no mind to renounce it."

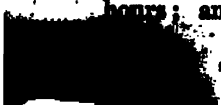
"You renounce me, then?" prompt as lightning was the answer; "I must be your world or nothing."

"Poetical exaggeration," said Lavinia.

"Once you loved poetry; I had your own words for it. Oh! how you have deceived me!"

"Deceived you!" exclaimed Lavinia, haughtily.

"Yes; deceived me," repeated Paolo, vehemently; "was it not deceiving me, when you made yourself appear what you were not? Have you forgotten the long conversation we had together at your first sitting for your portrait? We compared tastes for hours; and yours suited mine, and mine yours."



Simplicity, affection, refinement, nature, those were your idols. What were jewels, operas, fashion, to a flower of the field, the song of the nightingale, a walk in the soft moonlight? I accepted every word that fell from your lips as Gospel truth; laugh at me for a fool. *You* care for flowers, or a man's honest heart! You care for nothing but noise, glitter, show, and conventionalities."

As Paolo spoke, Lavinia's proud head drooped. The conversation alluded to was as present to her mind as if it had occurred only yesterday; all that she had then said, carried away by strong sympathy, she had said in perfect good faith, and really felt at the moment; but every remembered word now fell on her conscience with the weight of a deserved reproach, for she could not deny that the tenor of her present existence was not easily to be reconciled with the inclinations and sentiments she had professed on that occasion.

"Yes," pursued the young man, "you pursue the shadow instead of the substance; to a little tinsel you sacrifice a mine of gold. Here, within your reach, is the strength which lays low mountains, the talisman which renders invincible, the fountain which gives eternal youth, and you throw them all from you. Blind that you are," went on Paolo,

with an irresistible burst of passion, "you trample upon the heart which contains all these treasures. Love, love divine, weighs less with you than a few grains of the incense of flattery. May the day never come when sickness and sorrow shall open your eyes, but too late, to the emptiness of what you hold to, to the value of what you let drop! Health, youth, riches, are but poor shields against misfortune, believe me; at all ages, and in all stations of life, we are vulnerable through those we love."

A strong conviction, unswervingly acted upon, and especially if passionately expressed, will command the respect even of those, who deem it ill-founded or even wrong—nay, it will do more—it will, at certain moments, make its very opponents doubt the soundness of their own arguments against it, the wisdom of their own opposition. More than once had Lavinia, while still under the spell of Paolo's thrilling accents, entertained such doubts, such fears; half formed a resolution to humour his whims; and, if not entirely to withdraw from the gay world, at least to slacken the chains binding her to it. But these were mariner's vows. The world is a tyrannical master, and admits of no half-service. It is like one of those irresistible machines, in which

if you get so much as a limb entangled, the rest of your body is sure to follow, and be pounded to atoms.

A young lady enrolled in the world's militia can no more safely leave its ranks than a soldier his regiment on the battle-field. Fancy the brilliant Miss Jones expressing her unwillingness to go to the duchess's party, or wishing to leave some embassy ball at midnight. Nonsense! she must not lose the position she had gained; it would be stupid, or strange, or ridiculous. Who has not seen sober people quarrelled with for not drinking themselves drunk with a company flushed with wine? Who has not heard young ladies' beauty slandered because they wore high dresses? One must be endowed with a singular power of isolation to react against the intellectual atmosphere one breathes. Miss Jones had not this power; how could she have acquired it? So she rushed along with the current, the more madly that she wanted to escape from her own reflections.

Nor was Mancini himself free from occasional misgivings, that he was too absolute in his requirements, too exacting a lover. He accordingly made many resolves to be for the future more gentle and conciliating; but the passion of the moment whirled

away his good purposes like leaves on the wings of the wind. "She is vulgar," would he say to himself in one of his stormy moods, "dazzled by light, intoxicated by sound, happy to display her beauty—to flutter about like a gaudy butterfly. I might sooner extract honey from a stone, than love from her heart." Then followed the reaction, and an inner voice would make itself heard, replying, "Well, suppose her to be all this, what right have I to plague her life thus? She has been educated in this way, and she cannot change. I must either take her as she is, or leave her. To torment her as I do, is ungenerous, nay cowardly. Better cut the Gordian knot, and be done with it. I'll write her a letter and go away—to-morrow." The letter was written, the morrow came, and the day after to-morrow, and another and yet another morrow were added, and he was still in Rome, the prey and sport of the most harrowing irresolution. The effort he had once made he was now incapable of renewing. Seven words had unnerved him, "I love you with all my heart." They had traced a magic circle round him which, do what he would, he could not overstep. Thornton had been a true prophet when he had foretold this state of things—Thornton who, seeing his prophecy fulfilled, far from triumphing or deriding, was to Paolo the

meekest, most indulgent, and considerate of comforters and friends.

In this conflict of feeling Paolo wasted away; each succeeding hour his heart quivered and shrank in Lavinia's hold, as does a bird in the unconsciously cruel grasp of a child.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT THERE IS IN A ROLL OF PARCHMENT.

PAOLO was preparing one day to go to Miss Lavinia, when he was interrupted by Du Genre, dressed *cap-à-pie* for travelling, coming in to bid him a hasty farewell. The French realist had been summoned to France by the express desire of an old uncle of his residing in Dauphiné, on whom the faculty of medicine had passed sentence of death.

“The wish of a bachelor uncle, furnished with a brace of thousand francs for every month in the year, is sacred at all times,” said the facetious Frenchman; “though I must say it is scarcely delicate of the good old gentleman to get worse just on the eve of the Carnival, and thus deprive a dutiful nephew of the honest recreations of the season he had been anticipating. ‘*Entre la coupe et la lèvres,*’ as we say in France. I should not have minded the call so much eight-and-forty hours later.

But, no. I must be at Civita Vecchia by daybreak, because the steamer piques itself on keeping its time to a minute. We live in an absurd world; by Jupiter! we do. We human beings are born and die in and out of season, disregarding of all order and method; and yet the things we create for our use, we insist on their being models of punctuality."

"Forty-eight hours of pleasure you can probably redeem at some other period," said Paolo, by way of comfort.

"Most illogically reasoned, my dear Telemachus: no loss is ever redeemed; if you go without dinner to-day, and eat two to-morrow, you have not made up your loss of to-day. You forget that a couple of days' respite would enable me to assist at Armida's *début*, and I regret sorely not to do so."

"What Armida? What *début*?" asked the Roman.

"No use playing the Indian with me," retorted the Frenchman; "you are too intimate in certain quarters not to know all about it, you sly rogue."

"As true as I live, I have no idea as to whom you are alluding," said Paolo, somewhat anxiously.

"To put you on the right track, I will put a dot on my I's," replied the realist. "In the first place, then, Armida is the *nom de guerre* of a

ravishing Inglesina, of whom that lying jade, Rumour, says you know more than most people."

Paolo frowned.

"Oblige me by giving no nicknames to a person, to a lady, who honours me with her acquaintance."

"There, already in the saddle! as ticklish and pugnacious as an American senator," said Du Genre. "Pardon me, but I only call the fair one what all Rome calls her. I mean no disparagement, I assure you; quite the contrary. Armida is a name rendered famous, I have heard, by one of your own great poets. I never read Tasso; in point of poetry, Berenger is my alpha and omega."

"And this *début*?" inquired Paolo.

"This *début* is to take place on the day after to-morrow, at the private theatre of the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos. Every one with the smallest claim to fashion is to be there. But come now, you know better than I do."

"Go on, pray," said Paolo, briefly.

With a little less brilliancy in his intonations than usual, Du Genre continued,—

"The marchioness is Queen Elizabeth; Arm—the Inglesina, I mean—Mary Stuart. Leicester's part is entrusted to a tenor, an amateur, but who beats Mario, I am told—the Prince of Rocca-Ginestra."

To judge from the dark crimson of Paolo's countenance, all the blood in his veins had rushed tumultuously to his head; two seconds after, he was pale as death. Likely enough, Du Genre drew his own inferences from signs that he could not but remark; but he kept his thoughts to himself, breaking a conscious silence, by saying, "Well, good-by, my dear Telemachus."—A sort of emotion, quite unanticipated, troubled his fluency. "If you come to Paris, I depend on your seeking me out, for in that heavenly city I shall surely be. Life is possible nowhere but in Paris, and, perhaps, in Rome. Paris is the place for you; it will cure you of your tragic views of life. You are one of the best fellows I know. I never flatter, but on certain matters—— well, I shall not enlarge on the theme of your errors at present. Believe me, and you'll be the happier for it. Life is a farce; and, with all love and respect, I say, *Sans adieu!*" and the good-natured, volatile fellow hurried away, singing, as he ran down the stairs, in a voice that had a touch of pathos in it, "*Tout n'est dans ce bas monde qu'un jeu, qu'un jeu.*" The echo of the singer's voice had scarcely died away, when Paolo rushed forth, on his way to Palazzo Morlacchi.

There is in the heart of even a worldly woman,

who loves, be it ever so little, a vein of gold, which, if properly tracked and delicately handled, will yield a crop past expectation; but, if roughly dealt with, will be lost sight of amid the rubbish in which it is imbedded. Could the incensed youth have read Miss Jones's innermost thoughts, at the moment he was breathing nothing but scorn and indignation against her, he would have fallen at her feet in adoration. Lavinia had never been so near taking a step in the direction wished by Paolo as on this particular day; it needed so little to have fostered the intention into a fact. The idea of taking a prominent part in the private theatricals, was becoming more and more disagreeable to her; how to draw back from her promise, was the subject that pre-occupied her every thought. It was not only that now, the first excitement of vanity being calmed, she had the hearty repugnance of a young and naturally modest woman to appear as a *débutante* on a stage, called private by courtesy; but that she was both frightened and annoyed at the ardour shown by the prince-tenor's pantomime towards her, ever since the dress rehearsals had commenced. Leicester was privileged by duty of his part, to kneel more than once to her, to take her hand, carry it to his heart, in short, express by look and gesture the most pas-

sionate love; and all that in duty he was bound to do, he did with a spontaneity, a life-like reality, that was the *nec plus ultra* of acting—if acting it was. The poor *pro tempore* Queen of Scots was sadly puzzled and displeased, when certain *apartés* not to be found in the libretto, reached her ear, and of which the earl-prince was lavish, when the queen-marchioness happened to be off the stage. Another source of uneasiness to Lavinia was the sudden and entire change which had come over the noble creole, since the aforesaid final rehearsals had commenced. To her ladyship's hitherto enthusiastic friendship for her English favourite, had succeeded the most icy coldness—indeed, a thorough estrangement was evidently imminent.

Miss Jones had more than once surprised flashes of anger in the fine black eyes, and tones of bitterness in the voice, of her dearest friend. Very vivid doubts suddenly awoke in the English girl's mind that the marchioness really was not the sort of woman she ought to have associated with intimately; nor the prince, the man she ought to act and sing with; and a perception grew daily stronger upon her, that Paolo had been right in his judgment of both. Accordingly, he had perhaps never stood higher in Miss Lavinia's opinion, than when, on this

day, hearing that he was in the atelier, she went thither with quick steps to meet him. Lest the reader should have forgotten it, we may as well here repeat, in a parenthesis, that the dialogue between master and pupil was always carried on in Italian, and consequently allowed the most perfect freedom of discussion; for the chaperones, Mrs. Jones, or Miss Jones's maid, who were, one or the other, always present at the interviews, were both triumphantly ignorant of any language but their own.

Lavinia's smile, as she approached him, was as rich in promise as is a rainbow in a cloudy sky, had Paolo been able rightly to interpret the sign; but at sight of his angry face, the glorious light faded away from her countenance.

"You grudge your oldest friend in Rome a share in the benefit you are going to confer on the multitude," began the Italian; "I mean," he added, seeing perplexity in her blue eyes, "I mean the pleasure of witnessing your triumphs as a singer and actress. The whole city is astir with the news of your approaching *début*, and you have left my poor hermitself in ignorance of the event; not even offered me an invitation—I should say, ticket of admission."

The tone of his voice made his words as ironical

as he wished ; they pained her, and made her good angel take flight.

"For a man of your high aspirations, and transcendental habits," answered she; "I was certain that such frivolous amusements could have no attraction."

"Frivolous!" he re-echoed. "You are very indulgent in thus baptizing them frivolous. Would to God they were only that ! Call them rather——"

"Pray," interrupted Lavinia, "spare me any more of your sermons. I am bound to render an account of my actions to *no one*, but to those who stand to me in the light of my parents."

"To no one else?" asked Paolo, with a look full of meaning.

"To no one else."

She pronounced the words firmly.

"Are you quite sure," proceeded Paolo, shaking from head to foot with repressed emotion, "are you indeed sure you have given to no one else the right of warning you?"

"If I ever gave such a right, I now withdraw it," was the quick, decided answer.

"Be it so then," exclaimed the young man, his wrath breaking bounds. "Be it so, and welcome—yes, welcome to debase yourself by way of asserting

your independence—welcome to add to the indecorum of exhibiting yourself as a public actress, the disgrace of doing so in company with a man, regarded by all Rome with abhorrence and disgust.”

“Your usual style of exaggeration,” said she; “you lend to *all Rome* your own individual feelings.”

“How becoming the defence of Prince Rocca-Ginestra sounds from your lips,” sneered Paolo. “That you may better vindicate that nobleman’s traduced character, allow me to relate to you one instance of his prowess.”

“Save yourself the trouble,” returned Lavinia, “it is quite unnecessary. I am already well aware of what really constitutes the prince’s crime in your eyes.”

“May I ask what you have decided that to be?”

“The being a prince,” she replied, “as it was the count’s being a count, as it is the marchioness’s being a marchioness.”

“Doubtless,” retorted Paolo, “I have blasphemed your gods, and they must be revenged. What excuse shall I make? I, and such as I am, you know, are uncivilized beings, and give ourselves the luxury of despising what is despicable, in spite of escutcheon and coronets.”

In all hardly contested battles, be it between two lovers, or be it between two armies, there comes a climax of exasperation, at which the wish to conquer becomes quite secondary to the wish of doing harm. This moment had arrived for Miss Lavinia; she did not believe a word of what she was going to say, but she knew it would goad him, and she said it.

"May we not affect sometimes to despise what we——envy?"

"Envy?" repeated he; "envy——what?"

"The grapes of the fable," said Lavinia, "were sour, because out of reach."

Paolo laughed outright, then said,—

"One instant, and I will show you the reverse of the fable."

He was gone.

There lay in a corner of Paolo's studio a rusty cylinder of tin, within which was enclosed a moth-eaten scroll of parchment, containing the letters patent of nobility of the first marquis, and count of the Holy Roman Empire, in the family Rodipani. The title was to descend to male heirs lawfully begotten, and, in default of the same, to the heirs female, who were by a special clause empowered to transmit it to their heirs male or

female. Paolo therefore, as the son and heir of the late marquis's daughter, had an incontrovertible right in force of this proviso,—and he knew that he had,—to assume the title of marquis, had he so chosen to do. This venerable parchment, rolled up in a cylinder of tin, to preserve it from all casualties, had been handed down from Rodipani to Rodipani, until, in course of time, it descended to our acquaintance, the old marquis. At his death, it passed, with a few other relics, into the hands of his daughter Bianca, married to Mancini, Paolo's father. At the demise of the latter, Paolo found the cylinder in a chest of family papers, and, loth to destroy anything that had belonged to either parent, he had laid it in a corner of his atelier to bide the ravages of time.

Well, Paolo—we crave the reader's indulgence for him; what he did was very childlike, but he was very young, and very much excited—well then, Paolo went and fetched the rusty tin case, and in about as many words as it has cost us lines, explained the nature of its contents to Miss Lavinia, finishing off with the flourish, that the grapes were within his reach, but that he scorned them. Upon this, with a somewhat melodramatic air—young folks are always so emphatic—he tore the innocent

parchment in twain, and cast the pieces at Miss Jones's feet.

It must be true that women have a weakness for theatrical effects, or Lavinia would not have thought Paolo as grand as we consider him petty. He, who could be a marquis, and would not be a marquis, appeared in her eyes a madman, but a sublime madman; and she applied herself with heart and will to cure him of such an aberration. She solemnly appealed to his reason; but her arguments, so unanswerable to her mind, broke into foam against what was a rock of principle with him, viz., that merit and demerit were strictly personal, and that the transmission of a badge of honour or dishonour to such as had done nothing to deserve the one or the other, was the acme of absurdity. She then appealed to his heart, reproaching him with little love for her, that he willingly cast aside the only sure means of conquering the obstacles that stood between him and her; she even tried to make a bargain, promising, if he would yield, to renounce now and for ever the theatricals at Villa Torralba, the prince, the marchioness and such like; but reproaches, entreaties, promises smote in vain against a sentiment all powerful with Paolo—the sentiment of what he owed to himself, to his

country and party. Not for her, not for the dominion of the world, would he desert the ranks of the people and join those of the aristocracy. He was too proud of his title of plebeian to exchange it for that of marquis, and so on. Paolo was not the son of his father for nothing. Lavinia did not, and could not understand him, nor he her. The difference of education, of the habits and feelings of a whole life, of the social and political state of the respective countries to which they belonged, raised between the two a sort of mental Chinese wall, which time alone, and dearly bought experience, and, above all, a change in the moral atmosphere, which both had hitherto exclusively breathed might level. The upshot of the present interview was, that they parted in anger, never, as far as words went, to meet again.

Perhaps the chapter ought not to conclude without meeting a question, probably asked by this time. Was there any justifiable foundation for Paolo's attacks upon the Prince of Rocca Ginestra? What had the prince done so dreadfully wrong? Here is a categorical answer. The prince, under an assumed humble name and station, had seduced a girl of the Transtevere, renowned for her beauty, and refused to right her when her fault could no

longer be concealed. The young woman, in despair, had thrown herself into the Tiber. The sad catastrophe created a great sensation, which lasted just the time great sensations last in large and busy cities. The prince left Rome, and spent a couple of years in travelling abroad, and, on his return, was an ornament, as before, of the best society. The universal feelings of abhorrence and disgust, about which Paolo enlarged, were, to say the truth, wholly confined to a few visionaries like himself, and to the Transteverini, who had not forgotten what had happened to one of their body, and who thenceforth bore a grudge to the prince, as uncivilized people are wont to do in similar cases.

CHAPTER VII.

A CRASH.

It is the 28th of December, the day fixed for the great operatic performance at Villa Torralba. The evening is cold and rainy. Rain and cold are of little matter to the rich, who have at their disposal downy-cushioned, comfortable carriages, and plenty of furs and cashmeres to shelter them from such nuisances. The *crème de la crème* are on their way to the Marchioness Delfuego y Arcos'.

In his room in the Via Babuino sits Paolo, more dead than alive. The die is cast, Paolo will be away presently. His trunks are packed, and already on the travelling carriage, which is standing at the street door. Post horses are bespoken, and Thornton's Italian servant waits but a word from his master to go and fetch them. Thornton himself, paler and thinner than ever, the double scar round his mouth more marked than usual, walks in and out of the

room, seats himself for an instant, rises the next; he is anxious and perplexed. At last he ventures on saying, "Shall we send for the horses, Paolo?"

"Not yet, not before Salvator comes; he is to be here the moment the—the entertainment is over. I cannot decently go after making him promise to come."

Mortimer is silent: he goes away, returns, sits down, gets up; at last, he speaks again.

"What is the use of prolonging this agony? If any good could arise from delay—but you know, she will do as she said. Salvator told you this morning he had heard of no change in her intention. Better go at once, if you are to go at all. Come, Paolo, be a man."

"Ah! it is easy to say, be a man," Paolo says, with a smile that brings tears to Thornton's eyes; "less easy to be so, when all your blood gushes out through a large gap in your heart."

Mortimer walks to the window, and by the light of the street-lamps studies the pouring rain. Thornton feels the more keenly for Paolo, because he sees in him a living image of himself, as he was years ago, only he had had no friend by his side.

Paolo flings himself on the sofa, and buries his head in the cushions. Paolo cannot believe that he

is really going from Rome, cannot believe that Lavinia will ever consummate an act, which he has told her is to separate them for ever. His whole being clings desperately to this woman, as a shipwrecked mariner clings to the plank which is his only chance of life. Paolo hopes against hope, and finds legitimate reasons for hope in all the possible, and next to impossible, contingencies suggested by his fevered brain. She might have altered her mind at the last minute; the performance might have been put off on account of the weather (even a respite would be a godsend to him); somebody might be ill—not she, God forbid! but the marchioness, the prince might have a cold; or the accursed theatre might have caught fire; or an earthquake shaken it from its foundations as the curtain rose. Why not? such things had been; he recollected the story of an unfortunate wretch, absolutely on his way to the scaffold, whose life had been saved by such a catastrophe.

Hark! eight o'clock strikes,—the fatal hour. A whistle, and there she is on the stage in all her beauty. Hundreds of eyes are riveted on and devour the noblest form that ever came from the hands of nature. She sings; every breath is held; you might hear the fall of a pin. She sings as she

alone can sing, as she sang to him. She ceases, and long loud plaudits make the walls tremble; bouquets fall in a shower at her feet; fashionables of all ages, with curly locks or bald pates, or hoary-haired lords, dukes, princes, loll half out of the boxes, languidly flapping their white gloves together, striving who shall win a look or a smile from her. She bows and smiles, and smiles and bows; retires, and is forced to reappear, and encored *sine fine*. There never was such a *furor* of admiration. Well may she look as radiantly happy as she does; happy, independently of him; happy without him; happy in spite of him; happy, while his heart breaks. No, it cannot: it shall not be. Here comes the avenger. A young man, so pale and haggard, more like a phantom than real flesh and blood, reels towards her. She shrinks from him in terror; he follows, reaches her, and stabs himself at her feet. There, it is her work.

While the young man's heated imagination was running riot on such scenes, Mortimer watched the lapse of time.

"Half-past nine, Paolo; had anything occurred to put a stop to the performance, Salvator would have been here long ago. Shall I send for the horses?"

"Not yet; not till Salvator comes. Have patience with me, I pray."

Another hour went by, a vigorous pull at the door bell, and in rushed Salvator Rosa, as thoroughly drenched as if he had spent the last week at the bottom of a well. Water dripped from his shapeless hat, from the sleeves, from the flaps of his famous black coat, water ran down from his brow, nose, ears, chin, hands. His progress through the room was like that of a watering-pot. A small lake formed on the spot where he stood still. He would have served as a model for a river god.

"Well?" exclaimed Paolo.

"Well?" exclaimed Thornton.

Salvator had run so fast that he had no breath left to speak his tidings. He pointed to his tongue, which clove to his palate, and by signs asked for drink. Mortimer went for some wine, and was in the act of pouring some into a glass, when the little man snatched the bottle from his hand, and, putting it to his mouth, half emptied it at a draught. Giving a long sigh of relief, half-singing, half-speaking, he pronounced,—

"Fiasco solenne."

"Poor fellow, say no more until you have changed your clothes," said Thornton.

"No, no ; first and foremost, my story," cried the excited painter of scenes ; "though I will pull off my boots, if you have a pair of slippers to spare, it needn't stop my tongue." Seated with his back to the fire, and struggling violently with his wet boots, Salvator began, "Well, there never was a more promising beginning——"

"What about Miss Jones?" interrupted Paolo.

"Miss Jones is safe at home. Well," he continued, allowing Thornton to take off his coat, and put a railway wrapper round him.

"Did she, or did she not, appear on the stage?" asked Paolo.

"Yes, she did, of course ;" and Salvator, for the third time, repeated his beginning "Well," when Paolo a third time abruptly stopped him with,—

"What has happened to her?"

"My dear fellow," returned the good-natured narrator, "if you won't let me speak, you will never hear what has happened. Well," resumed he for the fourth time, "as I said before, there never was a more promising beginning, nor a more sudden or melancholy conclusion ; though, I must say, I, for my part, have not been without misgivings as to something of the sort. *Il sospetto in cor parlava ;* but I must not anticipate. The first chorus was

got through beautifully, and the tenor's *Ah! chi sa se in questo istante* was charmingly sung. Even a tyro, and the prince is far from that, could not have helped producing an effect; the words are so pathetic. I wrote them myself really from inspiration; I did, I assure you. Well, to the point. Next, you know, comes the contralto's *recitativo obbligato*. Armid—, Miss Lavinia, I mean, gave it in masterly style; it created a *furor*, the very chairs clapped. Upon my faith, Paolo, when a woman possesses a voice like that, it is a sin to smother it."

"If you would oblige me by leaving all comments for another time, and give us facts now," was the reply.

"*Gelosia il sen mi lasera*," sang the incorrigible little fellow.

"Well, let us stick to facts. Miss Mary Stuart's recitative is followed by a cavatina commencing with a lovely adagio, which progresses into an andantino vivace, during which Prince of Rocca Ginestra—Leicester, I mean—makes his appearance. Here is the culminating point of the first act, the duetto between the tenor and contralto. Let me explain the plot clearly. The scene is in a forest. Leicester, who has accompanied Queen Elizabeth on a hunting expedition, gives his royal

mistress the slip, and comes to where Queen Mary is in tears. *Perche piangi?* and all the rest. She gives her motives for [weeping: '*Sola son tradita oppressa—non un cor che al mio risponda.*' 'There is a heart which answers thine,' says Leicester. 'Whose heart?' asks she. 'Mine.' Upon which he falls at her feet, and roars out a sublime *Io t'amo*. With this tremendous *Io t'amo* ends the andante vivace of the duetto and *subito* the stretta begins, *m'ami dunque? Io t'amo, oh gioja! ta-ta-ta—re-re-ra*. It is at this juncture—after the stretta, mark, and not before—that Queen Elizabeth ought to step forth and surprise Leicester at the feet of Mary. Here is the moment to inform you of certain suspicions of mine. A series of observations which I had made, quite involuntary, on the marchioness during the latter rehearsals, had given me some not very vague apprehensions that this duetto would bring forth mischief. I had seen her ladyship change colour at certain ticklish passages; then she was so whimsical, so peevish, cavilling constantly at the two singers, ridiculing Leicester's exaggerated acting, finding fault with the English young lady's singing, even going so far one day as to propose that the duetto should be left out;—in short, her behaviour was so unaccountable, that

I could not get rid of the belief that the jealousy of Queen Elizabeth would not be feigned. You know, or perhaps you do not know, that it is believed the marchioness—how shall I say it? it is hard to speak against a person whose bread I eat—well, the rumour is, that there is a flirtation between her and the prince. It may be so, or it may not: rumour, generally speaking, is a liar; but the up-shot of the duetto was this. Leicester, on his knees, had scarcely sung out his passionate *Io t'amo*, when, lo and behold!—my hair rises on my head again at the mere recollection—out comes the marchioness with the spring of a tigress, and sends the luckless prince flat on his back. The orchestra, busy with the stretta, losing their wits at the untimely entry, hesitate, blunder, and stop; the audience, in their ignorance, applaud such natural acting. Something must be done. I leap out of my prompter's box, run to the scenes on the left, and, piff-paff, let down the curtain. Was it a time coming down, that weary curtain! However, down it was at last, and then I hurried to the field of battle. All the staff of the theatre were already assembled there. The scene that was enacting baffles description. The prince, with some of the men of the chorus, were endeavouring to pacify,

and induce the enraged marchioness to leave the stage, so that what she was saying might not be heard by those in the boxes and the pit. But there she stood in a paroxysm of passion, threatening with hands and looks Miss Lavinia, and calling her bad names, luckily in Spanish. Miss Lavinia, white as the whitest marble, but composed and self-collected, stood erect like a true queen, gazing scornfully at her antagonist, not speaking a word, save when she said, on my approaching her, 'I deserve it all for having ever set my foot in this house. I have not lacked for warnings. Tell this to Signor Paolo.' Depend upon it, my friend, there is the right stuff of a woman in that girl. Presently, the audience began to show symptoms of impatience. A noise, like that of the rising tide, diversified with a hiss or two, were premonitory signs of a coming storm. I shook myself up, and with a 'To the breach, friend Salvator!' slipped from behind the curtain, and summoning to my aid my best bow and most winning smile, said, *coram populo*, 'The marchioness offers to this distinguished assembly her heartfelt regret and excuses; she deposes me, ladies and gentlemen, to assure you, that no one here present can more sincerely deplore than does her ladyship the unfortunate indisposition of one

of the principal performers, which puts an inevitable stop to the opera for this evening.' For an impromptu not so bad, was it? but, for pity's sake, something to drink, or I shall never get to the end of my story. I have not finished yet; there is a tail to the comet."


Salvator drank, smacked his lips expressively, and continued, "To make what followed clear to you, I must use the past tense. Have patience a moment. For days, you must understand, I had been urging on the marchioness the propriety and prudence of admitting no one behind the scenes, save those who had business there. At last, and not without difficulty, I got her persuaded to issue this prohibition; but at the same time she insisted on an exception in favour of Count Fortiguerra, a special favourite of hers. He would be so useful, he was so clever and experienced, and all that. He was useful, no gainsaying that, though his presence was a perpetual eyesore to me. I distrusted him greatly; not in consequence of Paolo's surmises about him; no, I had surer foundations to build on. One of our chorus singers, an elderly man, a native of Ancona, had recognized him as a fellow-citizen, and repeatedly warned us that he was no count at all, but a noted swindler. Be this true

or not, the old Anconitan, Clelia and I, agreed that we would keep a close watch on the *soi-disant* count; for, besides all sorts of costly dresses and valuable ornaments, there were the marchioness's diamonds to be specially looked after. They had been arranged for the occasion as a diadem to be worn in the last act, and their value, the marchioness said, was immense. Clelia had charge of this crown, and some other jewels, kept in their cases, ready for use, in a light closet adjoining the stage, and which served as her ladyship's dressing-room. In the surprise and bustle of the improvised scene of jealousy, the count and the diamonds were forgotten by us all three. Now, to return. When, after performing another graceful salaam to the public, I retired once more behind the curtain, I was charmed to find actual hostilities had ceased. My lady had allowed herself to be led to the very back of the stage, and, though still looking fierce, looked less intensely so than before. She had ceased venting her fury in language, and maintained a sullen silence. All this I saw at a glance, and also that Clelia was absent. Instantly the diamonds recurred to me. She is gone to look after them, thought I. Scarcely had the thought been formed, when a wild cry issued from the dressing-room. It was Clelia's voice. I

made but one bound from the spot where I stood, into the closet, and there I saw—we all saw, for every one on the stage followed at my heels—there we saw Clelia wrestling with the count, and the jewel-cases scattered on the ground. No need of words to explain what was the matter. Surprised in the very act of possessing himself of the jewels, the so-called count had let them drop, and was struggling to make his escape, which he might have easily done by a back stair, had Clelia's grasp of him been less resolutely tenacious. In another instant, I and some other men had hold of him. Well, what do you think the impudent rascal did? I scarcely believed my ears. As sure as I am here, he declared that he had caught Clelia in the act of making off with the diamonds, and that we had come in time to help him to secure her. But people can't help believing their own eyes, and no one for a moment doubted who was the thief. The prince called out for the gendarmes—there were half-a-dozen on duty at the villa—but the marchioness, breaking her silence, and looking rather pleased than not, forbade any stir to be made. 'Let the fellow go,' said she. 'I am not astonished at his turning out a thief; he was introduced to me at that fine lady's house,' pointing to Miss Lavinia, who really looked more

dead than alive. I whispered to Clelia to take the young English lady away to the laundry, while I, on my side, would try to find her uncle and aunt. I was fortunate enough to do so at once, and I ordered their carriage to a back entrance. Poor Miss Jones, how she clung to my Clelia! She put on one of Clelia's dresses to go away in; and there's an end of my story. I was told, as I made my way upstairs, to call down Miss Lavinia, that my lady had laconically dismissed every one about her, and retired to her own apartment. Clelia, who has been sleeping at the villa for the last fortnight, chose to stay, saying she would not leave her mistress in this moment of trial; so nothing remained for me to do, but to come hither as fast as I could—and here I am."

Having concluded his narrative, Salvator allowed himself to be persuaded to go and change his wet clothes, an act of prudence performed with harlequin-like celerity. Our trio, being too excited to have any chance of sleep, sat through the remainder of the night, talking of, and annotating on the events just narrated. Is it necessary to add, that the post horses were countermanded, and the travelling carriage ordered back to the coach-house? Lavinia in tears, Lavinia repentant, Lavinia unhappy,



had a thousandfold stronger hold on Paolo's heart than Lavinia the queen of beauty, Lavinia triumphant and happy. To go to her, to throw himself at her feet, to seek pardon for his roughness, to comfort and console her, such were now the yearnings of Paolo's whole soul. Thornton hazarded no remonstrance, did not even evince any surprise at Paolo's change of mind as to their intended departure. More than ever convinced that no good could come of his friend's attachment to Miss Jones, he felt that it was too deep-rooted to leave any chance of its being combated with success. Why then afflict one already so grievously afflicted? He could not harbour such a thought. Therefore, neither approving, nor disapproving, he kept Paolo faithful company down the dangerous slope he was bent on treading, intent only on sparing, or at least softening for him, the shocks and falls inevitable on that slippery descent.

About dawn, Salvator's spirit refusing to support his flesh any longer, he gave way, and stretching his weary little body on a tolerably hard sofa, was soon sound asleep. Salvator's lively tongue once at rest, all conversation ceased; Paolo and Thornton sat on awhile, each communing with his own thoughts, until the bright sun shining into the

room, warned them to make ready for another day's burdens.

The friends had not long retired to their own rooms, when a letter was brought to Paolo. It was from Lavinia. She wrote:—

“If you are generous enough, and I am sure you are, to wish to see once more one who has rendered you evil for good, pray come here as soon as you can. We leave this evening; I shall be at home all day. It will be a great comfort to me, if he who has witnessed my folly should also witness my repentance.

“L. J.”

What transports of joy and despair did these few lines give rise to: joy at the entire recantation avowed by them, despair at the intimation of approaching separation. The resolution of the English family to quit Rome, will surprise no one less than it did Paolo. He had been sure of it. After what had passed, even a man less sensitive to the world's ridicule than Mr. Jones, might be reasonably apprehensive of, and shrink from the award of public opinion. The one fact of having patronized—worse, of having allowed himself to be patronized by—an impostor and matriculated thief,

was sufficient to make the most self-conceited soul alive, aware, that, for the present, Rome was no place for him or his family.

The abrupt and mysterious termination of the entertainment at Villa Torralba, was, naturally enough, the talk of all the city. The most absurd stories were circulating, and, moreover, finding credence; for instance, the marchioness in a fit of jealousy had stabbed the Prince of Rocca Ginestra, whose life was despaired of; a fabulous sum, and a fabulous amount of diamonds, had been offered to, and accepted by the Government as hush-money. Miss Jones had, in her attempt to save the prince, her betrothed, received a serious wound. These were the prominent *on dits* of wide-mouthed rumour, brought to Via Babuino by Salvator, who had gone out early to collect the public gossip.

Paolo went to Palazzo Morlacchi at as early an hour as he decently could. The first part of the interview was such as might be expected, under the circumstances, from two noble extreme natures—a struggle of generosity as to who should take the most blame, and most exonerate the other. The second scene was as intimate, explicit, and full of candour, as was to be looked for from two young lovers, who, after much discord, found out that they

had but one mind, one heart between them, and were on the point of parting. Paolo had made more way in Lavinia's heart during the last few hours, than during the previous four months of their acquaintance. They solemnly pledged their troth the one to the other, and interchanged love tokens— Paolo giving to Lavinia a small gold ring, once his mother's, and Lavinia, at his prayer, cutting off one of her heavy ringlets for him. She also willingly promised to humour a whim of his, never to alter her style of wearing her hair, but to wear it twisted into a diadem round her head, as it was when he first saw and loved her.

“When we next meet,” said childlike Paolo, “the mere sight of your hair arranged in the way I like so much, will tell me that you have thought of me and still love me.”

And now it remained to be settled when and where Paolo could join her. As neither aunt nor niece knew anything of Mr. Jones's plans for the future, save that Siena was to be their first halt, the fixing on a date and place of meeting beforehand was a matter of utter impossibility. All that Lavinia could do was to promise that whenever they should be certain of stopping somewhere for any length of time, she would let Paolo know, and send their address.

Then he would join them, but not before a certain time had elapsed between the day of his receiving her letter and that of his departure. This condition greatly ruffled the impatient young man, who, however, was made to understand how Mr. Jones's suspicions could not fail to be aroused by the coincidence of Paolo's immediate arrival with the fact of their having just settled. Lavinia named a month, but, on Paolo's urgent entreaties, reduced it to a fortnight. That fortnight aunt and niece would employ in trying to prepare Mr. Jones for Paolo's possible reappearance, on the strength of a project they had heard him mention, of visiting that particular town or city.

The moment of separation was now at hand. Those who have been in a similar predicament know what such moments are like; words cannot describe it to those who are ignorant of such bitter quarters of an hour, when the liveliest faith, and the most vivid hopes, grow dim. Clelia, luckily or unluckily, made her appearance at this critical moment. She had come, at Lavinia's own pressing invitation, to be thanked for the kindness shown in the emergency at Villa Torralba. Paolo was thus forced to put a control on his emotions, and Lavinia's farewell was more constrained than perhaps it might

otherwise have been. But there were no reasons to prevent Paolo from showing his feelings towards kind Mrs. Jones. He took an affectionate leave of her, and a more formal one of Mr. Jones, and then, with a full heart, went his way.

As the Jones's travelling carriage emerged from Porta del Popolo at six o'clock that same evening, Lavinia noticed a tall figure wrapped in a cloak by the roadside, and saw, with a fluttering heart, a white handkerchief waved towards her—the last salute of poor bereaved Paolo.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE RACK.

So long as the honey gathered at his last meeting with Miss Jones remained fresh on Paolo's lips, life went on with him better than he had hoped; but when each succeeding day and week carried away a particle of the sweet, and the bitter beneath made itself felt anew; when, to be more clear, the recollections, the images and feelings, connected with that blessed interview, began to fade, and to be superseded by recollections, images, and feelings of far older date, and far less agreeable nature; a new hell commenced for our poor friend. Wherever she went, the allurements of the world were sure to pursue one of her beauty and accomplishments; and could she, nay, would she, resist them for his sake? Was there any good reason why what had been, should not be again? Surely, she had forgotten him by this time; and so on. Such were

the promptings of the tormentor within Paolo. Doubt, distrust, and jealousy, "the jaundice of the soul," kept him ever on the rack. Confidence in love is like the flower of the aloes, it blossoms but once.

He ate not, slept not, spoke not, he wandered about like a soul in pain. His sole solace, his sole diversion, were long walks alone of a night, out by that Porta del Popolo, where he had seen her for the last time. Shut up in his atelier all day long, inaccessible to his friends, even to Thornton and Salvator, unmindful of colours and palette, he rolled unceasingly his Sisypheus stone. The only human being he did not shrink from, was Salvator's betrothed. Clelia had seen *her* last, thought well of her, and succeeded at intervals in inspiring him with some of her own faith in her. But Clelia's visits were rare as an angel's, and indeed so were Salvator's attempts to see him. All his time, as well as Clelia's, was taken up by the concerns at Villa Torralba, where *opus fervebat* now more than ever. Her ladyship had quickly recovered the late shock to her feelings, and had devoted all the resources of her active mind, and full purse, to filling up the important hiatus left in her operatic company by Miss Jones's secession. A professional *prima donna* had been engaged

in Naples, rehearsal followed rehearsal apace, and scarcely two weeks after the date of the *fiasco solenne*, Maria Stuarda was performed to the accompaniment of the unbounded applause, and enthusiastic admiration of the same select audience, who, but a few days back, had made it the butt of their ridicule, and freely slandered in every one of their drawing-rooms the entertainer and the entertainment. No people in the world like fine people for their *savoir vivre*.

Seven weeks had gone by, and no letter from Miss Jones. What more conclusive proof could there be that he was forgotten? Despair was gnawing at the very core of Paolo's heart. Now, what had really become of the travellers? They only passed through Siena. Siena was bitterly cold and windy at that moment, and cold and wind peculiarly affected Mrs. Jones, grown more delicate than ever. Genoa would have suited her better, with its bright sun and balmy air, but it did not boast of sufficient English society for Mr. Jones, who objected, besides, to the narrow streets, all up and down, and, above all, to the Genoese cookery, which he pronounced uneatable. So, after a sojourn there of some days, away they went again; this time to Nice. No want of English there; plenty and

to spare. Nice found favour in Mr. Jones's eyes; it possessed also casinos and reading rooms. What he got to eat was far from good, but endurable; enough to prevent any immediate danger of starvation. The ladies liked the genial climate, the verdant hills, the blue sky, and sea. In this beatific condition of a family all of a mind, the Joneses pitched their tents *pro tempore* in Nice. *Pro tempore*, mark, for Mr. Jones, repeatedly sounded as to the duration of their stay, with his constant diplomatic rejoinder of, "we shall see," remained a perfect sphinx to aunt and niece. They were thus afraid to venture a letter to Paolo.

In the meanwhile, pleasant acquaintances blossomed for the Joneses; they visited *quantum suff.*, and partook in moderation of the amusements of the carnival. One cannot shut oneself up, like an owl in an ivy bush, while every other Christian mortal around one is gathering together, and—dancing. From the time of their leaving Rome, up to their arrival at Nice, Lavinia had lived like a nun; she had not yet overcome the shock of the catastrophe at Villa Torralba, and, to do her justice, had been quite under the dominion of the feelings roused by her separation from Paolo. But now she grew a little impatient at her own state of normal despon-

dency, and welcomed a little diversion. She had no more hesitation in so doing, than an invalid to swallow a potion prescribed by the physician. So long as she contracted no more intimacies, and did not make herself in any way conspicuous, she thought to herself, that she was committing no treason against Paolo. She was sure he would not grudge her some relaxation.

This congenial regimen came to a sudden stop. Small towns, where everybody meets and knows everybody—an allusion, of course, applying solely to strangers, the aborigines counting for nothing—small towns have their inconveniences for those who, like Mr. Jones, have precedents they would fain forget, and have forgotten. The signal for the Joneses' retreat from Nice was given by the arrival of an English family, with whom they had been acquainted at Rome. Paris is big enough to allow of a man, be he ever so on the defensive, spending some time there without much fear of disagreeable encounters. Our family, therefore, proceeded to Paris, and were soon as comfortably established as money could make them.

Among the pleasant acquaintances made at Nice, figured a certain Vicomte du Verlat, a well-bred, well-informed, sober-looking, middle-aged man, who

had gone to Paris the week before Mr. Jones had felt himself compelled to decide on going thither also. But before his departure, the vicomte had left his Paris address with the Joneses, courteously soliciting the favour of being made acquainted with their presence in the French capital, whenever they might happen to be there. The state of the political horizon just then, as everybody may remember, clearly pointed to a close alliance between the two nations, and this anticipation created a reciprocal feeling of cordiality, which extended even to individuals. No sooner in Paris, than Mr. Jones left a card at the vicomte's hotel. The vicomte called immediately, begging leave to introduce his mother—wife he had none—and his sister, the générale. The introduction was mutually agreeable. Madame La Vicomtesse was a lively old lady of seventy, as fond of company, of dress, hot rooms, and late hours, as any gay young woman of twenty. The générale, so called from the rank of her husband, was one of the mirrors of fashion.

The old vicomtesse invited her son's English friends to a great dinner, and the générale gave them a *soirée dansante*. Lavinia produced a great sensation at both—so pretty and so rich—and invitations fell in showers on the English family, much of the same

calibre, and in the same way, dear reader, as is so graphically described in Lady Morgan's late Autobiography. In a wonderfully short time the Joneses were well launched in the best Parisian society.

And was the promised letter still unwritten to Paolo? Indeed, yes. More than the half of February had passed in this agreeable atmosphere, and still Mr. Jones continued impenetrable as to his intention of going or staying. It would be doing Miss Jones an unpardonable injustice to say that she was grown indifferent to the performance of a solemn promise. Though gently rocked into patience by the waves of admiration on which she floated, Lavinia had not relapsed into the Lavinia of Rome. Even in the midst of her triumphs as a beauty, she did think of the absent one; did think of him with a daily growing sense of uneasiness, lest he should misconstrue her long silence. After all, why should she not venture on writing? Even if they were to quit Paris, their next move could not be but to England, whither, at the worst, Mancini might easily follow them. Mrs. Jones warmly seconded the plan. Lavinia accordingly, on the 3rd of March, wrote and posted a letter for Rome, about the contents of which, all that it matters us to know is, that she stated her reasons for not

writing before, and gave her present address in Paris, 25, Boulevard des Capucines. This note despatched, Mrs. and Miss Jones spent a good deal of their spare time in calculating the probable epoch of Signor Mancini's arrival, with a view principally so to arrange matters as to have no peremptory engagements on their hands. According to their reckoning, Paolo, starting a fortnight after receipt of Miss Jones's letter, as had been settled, could not be in Paris before the end of March, at the soonest. They reckoned without Paolo's impatience.

Lavinia's letter had on him the effect that the introduction of air has on the half-dead bird shut up in a pneumatic machine. It revived him. His sombre despondency gave place to a feverish animation, a frantic longing to leave Rome at once. Those who know by experience what it is to be sick with hope deferred; those, for instance, who, receiving news of the dangerous illness of a far away mother or wife, burn to be on the road, yet for days have their movements hampered by passports, and police visas,—those alone can form an idea of the intensity of Paolo's impatience and restlessness. Fifteen more days of hell, in sight of paradise open and expecting you, are quite an eternity. The slave of his own word, Paolo uttered no complaint, but pined away

in silence, consumed by a low fever. No food, no rest by day or night. Thornton at last took fright at Paolo's ghastly paleness and lustrous eyes, until his fears, overcoming his repugnance to advise a step implying the breach of a promise—he did give the advice. Whatever the cause, reasoned Thornton, on which may be founded the desirableness of a fortnight's delay between the date of the letter's arrival and that of Paolo's starting, this cause must yield to a far more grave and pressing one: the probability of an illness or worse. Six days, more or less (nine days of the fatal term had elapsed by this time), cannot be of any material importance; some woman's whim, I daresay: to Paolo it is an affair of life or death.

Believing himself justified by such apprehensions, Thornton then proposed to Paolo that they should begin their journey at once, without further waiting, and Paolo grasped at the proposal as eagerly as a prisoner under sentence of death grasps at an offered respite. Their passage from Civita Vecchia was quick and horribly boisterous. Paolo, who throughout had suffered all the martyrdoms of sea-sickness, though scarcely able to stand on landing, nevertheless obstinately refused to take any rest, insisting on going on immediately to Lyons, a long and dreary

journey before the two great southern cities of France were connected by a railroad. There he had to resign himself to a forced halt of a couple of hours, and *en route* again by express train to Paris, where they arrived at seven in the evening. Theirs had not been travelling, it had been a race.

Thornton, who had been often in Paris before, took Paolo to a furnished house, which he had, on such occasions, preferred to showy, noisy hotels, and where he had always found a quiet, neat, comfortable lodging, with an obliging, well-bred landlady. This house stood at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré and the Rue de Rohan; this last street destined soon to disappear in the carrying out of the enlargement and embellishment of the city of Paris, as connected with the completion of the Louvre. Something to Thornton's disappointment, Madame Françoise, his model landlady, interspersed her welcome with various explanatory notes, as to how she, along with the other householders of the Rue de Rohan, had, consoled by a handsome indemnity, been condemned to expropriation; already, indeed, part of her movables had been transferred to another house; but there were still some rooms untouched, and, if they would suit *ce bon* Mr. Thornton, they should be at his disposal, until Madame Françoise

should be served with a definite notice to evacuate the premises. While this negotiation was pending, Paolo, far too impatient to wait for its conclusion, was changing his dress in one of the still furnished rooms.

It was past nine o'clock when Paolo, having finished his hasty toilette, desired that a coach might be sent for; he was too faint and giddy to walk. In vain did Mortimer try to dissuade him from seeking the Joneses at so late an hour; Paolo was not in a frame of mind or body to listen to sober counsel. Like Manzoni's poor Renzo after his libations at the Osteria of the Mezza Luna, our young friend could do nothing by halves. Paolo's excitement, for not being caused by wine, did not the less make his blood boil in his veins. So Thornton sent for a coach, and followed Paolo into it. Paolo said he would rather pay his first visit alone.

"I don't mean to call this evening," said Mortimer; "but as you are quite a stranger to Paris, I may as well go with you to the Boulevard des Capucines. I shall leave you at the door, if the family are at home. At all events, have an address of our lodging in your pocket;" and he gave him one.

Paolo yielded the point, and away they drove.

There were more people in the streets, than the

inducements of the hour well accounted for, considering the overcast sky, and the biting cold. Men and women in masquerade were sauntering hither and thither, wild shouts and yells issuing from the various groups. Hunting horns at a corner of a street, lustily answered by hunting horns from another corner, made the air ring with *fanfares*, which fell on Paolo's ears like something hellish. Strains of gay music borne on the wind, and a shuffling and trampling of feet, testified to waltzes, galopes, and whirling crowds. They passed a fine mansion, brilliantly illuminated with gas: mounted dragoons were stationed at the entrance, and regulated the advancing procession of carriages. Paolo saw flowers, and diamonds, and brilliant uniforms glittering in those equipages. Floods of music came from within. "A Walpurgis night," thought bewildered Paolo; "nothing but assembling, and feasting, and carousing all through the world. I declare they are mad, unless I am mad myself; perhaps I am; my head, I feel it, is all in a confusion. This Paris will be the death of me." Paolo was, indeed, disordered: half his thoughts he unconsciously expressed aloud.

"The majority of men are everywhere like children, who cannot bear to be left alone," observed Thornton, in a grave voice; "nothing frightens the

most of them so much as a quiet *tête-à-tête* with themselves."

The sights and sounds grating so harshly on Paolo's irritated nerves, and so unaccountable to a new comer, would have been immediately understood by any one, who knew anything of Paris and its habits. Our two travellers had reached the gayest capital in the world on the 23rd of March, which happened to be the day of mid-Lent, what the French call *La mi-Carême*. A race so mercurial, sociable, and greedy of excitement as the French, and especially the Parisians, could never go through the forty days of Lent without getting the jaundice. To avoid this danger, they cut it in half, and the day which marks the division, *i. e.* the *mi-Carême*, they make one of general rejoicing and carousing—in fact, a complete carnival compressed into the space of four-and-twenty hours. Hence the masqueraders and the fiddles, the hunting-horns and the big house with its thousand lights—no other than the *Ministère de la Marine*, opening its salons to stars and garters, and even less distinguished mortals, among them some of Paolo's acquaintances. Who was to dream of his being in Paris on the 23rd, when his arrival at the end of March was scarcely to be expected?

And so it came to pass that he found the Jones family ready for a ball in Paris, just as, some months ago, he had found them ready for a ball in Rome. Miss Jones, in full array, now as then—bouquet, cassolette, fan, tablets, embroidered handkerchief—the coincidence was little calculated to dissipate the gloom weighing on her lover's spirits. One alteration, seen at a glance, struck him most painfully. That rich and glossy hair of hers, which, for his sake, she was to wear diadem-like, which was to be, on their first meeting, a sort of banner, as it were, of her unchanged feelings, was, alas! gathered into two large rolls right and left of her head, in obedience to the fashion of the moment. His hopes sank, and so might his legs, but for a friendly arm-chair close by, at which he caught for support. Miss Jones felt the awkwardness of the situation the more, as she could do nothing to improve it in the way of the warm welcome prompted by her heart, in the presence of her uncle, standing there with looks of mingled suspicion and vexation. Mrs. Jones had entirely lost all presence of mind. The scene, though short and mute, did not lack meaning.

Miss Lavinia was the one to break the spell. She said how glad she was, how glad they all were, to

see their kind Roman friend at Paris, and how she regretted that for this evening they could not have the pleasure of his society.

Paolo stammered out his regret for having intruded at what he saw was an unseasonable hour.

"When would he call again?" asked Lavinia.

"At midday on the morrow," said Paolo.

Mrs. Jones here said some words in a low voice to her niece, who replied,

"No, do not come to-morrow morning, we are engaged in the morning; but," added she, "come to tea at nine. It is so lucky we have no engagement for the evening. You will come?"

He said he would.

"Good-bye, and don't be later than nine," she added, with a smile.

The interview was over; it had not lasted ten minutes.

Paolo would fain have walked home, to let the bitter, icy night wind cool his hot, throbbing temples; but he felt as if his legs were weak as water. He beckoned to a coach, and, as he threw himself into it, called out "Via Babuino." The coachman declared he knew of no such street. Something of remonstrance in the man's voice forced Paolo to a mental

effort, and then he recollected careful Thornton having made him put into his waistcoat pocket a card on which was written his Paris address.

"*A la bonne heure*," says the driver, "Rue de Rohan."

As he drove along, Paolo at moments was not sure whether he was in Rome or in Paris—at moments the very consciousness of his own identity forsook him.

"How are your friends?" inquired Thornton as soon as he saw the young man.

"Quite well, very well indeed," said Paolo, taking up a candle.

"You made but a short visit," insisted Mortimer.

"Very short. Good night," said Paolo.

"Won't you take a cup of tea before you go to bed? it will refresh you."

"No, thank you, I feel perfectly well;" and this time Thornton found no more questions to ask.

Paolo went to his bed, and made, it must be confessed, so poor a night of it, that he might as well have sat up, and unburdened his heart to his good friend. Not that he was suffering acutely, either mentally or physically; no, on the contrary, there was a kind of damper on his outer and inner man, which deadened all his sensations. What harassed

him most was the impossibility of sleeping, combined with the greatest desire to do so. He stumbled incessantly against the narrow bridge, which forms the boundary between vigil and sleep. Whenever he neared the longed-for end, he slipped, and startled by the shock, was wide awake again from head to foot. Towards the morning he had an hour or more of heavy slumber, haunted by painful fantastic visions.

CHAPTER IX.

A BALL AT THE HOTEL DE VILLE.

THE reason why the ladies of the Boulevard des Capucines had put off a second visit from Paolo for four and twenty hours, was that they had been given tickets to see the reception of a new Member of the Institute; and the ceremony was to take place exactly the morning following the evening, when he had appeared in their salon as unexpectedly, and with as startling an effect, as if he had been a bomb or a Bengal light. As a rule, surprises are to be avoided—an agreeable surprise is about as rare as a black swan.

To return to the Academy of France; the speech of the newly elected member, a wit as sharp as a needle; and the speech in response of the old member, who was to receive the new one, a most eloquent atrabilarian: were expected with an intense interest, and lively curiosity, nearly allied to that

of amateurs of the prize ring. Both men had been political *notabilités*; both had been the standard-bearers of opposed, now deposed dynasties; therefore both were expected to hurl at each other's head, and at the heads of their rival governments, and at the head of the government which had ousted theirs, a profusion of elegant, well-balanced contumely. Nor was the general expectation disappointed, judging by the frantic applause of the closely packed audience. To our English family it was a bore from beginning to end. Four long hours of even the choicest rhetoric are more than sufficient for those most capable of appreciating it, and the Joneses were certainly not among such: the ladies owing to preoccupations of their own, and the gentleman from the slight knowledge of the language. Fashion has its drawbacks; but the satisfaction of being able to say, "I was at the Institute on the day of Monsieur So-and-so's public reception as an Academician, is worth buying at the cost of some *ennui*."

The Vicomte du Werlat, who had provided tickets for the family with the sweat of his brow, was there as a matter of course, and joined his English acquaintances as they were coming out. After a few minutes' talk with Miss Lavinia, he

said, as he was taking leave, that he counted on the pleasure of meeting her again in the evening.

"You mean at the Hôtel de Ville," said Lavinia; "but we have received no tickets."

"No tickets?" exclaimed the vicomte. "Impossible! I saw your names down on my sister's list; there must be some mistake, which I will have set to rights."

"Pray don't," was the young lady's hasty rejoinder; "we are all tired with our constant dissipation; besides, we expect company ourselves this evening."

"Nevertheless, I hope to meet you at the ball," persisted the vicomte. "It would be a crime of lèse-nationality to miss a fête given expressly in honour of the English, and at which your lord mayor is to be present. Allow me to say *au revoir*;" and, raising his hat, the polite Frenchman went his way.

The aunt and niece were rather provoked at the vicomte's gallantry, which threatened to interfere with their quiet tea at home, and agreed to aid each other in resisting all attempts to induce them to go to the Hôtel de Ville. But there is a fate against lovers. Eight in the evening was striking, and

Mrs. and Miss Jones were just leaving the dinner-table, when Madame la Générale was announced.

“The préfet is a monster; he shall account to me for his conduct. You must go with us; the General will get admission for you. The Emperor is to be there at half-past nine, so we must not be later than nine. I am sorry, but I can allow you only three-quarters of an hour to dress. I will wait here for you; you see I am already dressed.” The whole of this speech was run off in a breath.

Lavinia, thanking Madame la Générale warmly, begged to be excused; Mrs. Jones alleged that they had invited a gentleman to tea: the Générale would hear of no objection, accept no excuse. Mr. Jones now interfered by telling his wife, she was making much ado about nothing. The drawing-master could come some other evening, there was nothing to prevent their going. There are moral as well as physical impossibilities. To persist in declining an offer meant in kindness, when you cannot give your reasons for doing so, is one of the number. Mrs. Jones and Lavinia had to yield and withdraw to dress, as did Mr. Jones. The Générale remained alone in the salon, turning over the leaves of an illustrated work, but her eyes often consulting the clock on the mantelpiece.

Lavinia did not take long to dress: for the first time in her life, she cared little what she put on, or how she looked. Her maid was in ecstasies of despair at her young lady's hurry. The minutes thus saved from the three-quarters of an hour allotted by the Générale, were spent in writing a hurried note to Paolo:—

“ We are going to the ball at the Hôtel de Ville. Do not, I entreat of you, be angry with me; it is not my fault; it is against my will that I go. I am literally dragged there. You can ask my aunt. Long ago, cards of invitation were promised to us by a lady, who has been kind and attentive to us, ever since we came to Paris. Somehow or other, the tickets never came; I was very glad they did not. But this lady has come herself; she is even now waiting for us in the drawing-room, and insists on our going with her. Uncle has also insisted that we should go. It was *impossible* to say no. Indeed, it was. I will explain all the circumstances to you the first time I see you—and you will be convinced that I could not help myself. Come to-morrow at twelve, pray, to tell me that you are not angry with me. They are calling for me. Adieu. Don't think ill of me. I must go. .

“ L. J.”

Lavinia, leaving this note to her maid, with strict injunctions to wait for Signor Mancini in the hall, and to give it into his own hands, joined the party in the drawing-room. Immediately afterwards they drove off to the Hôtel de Ville.

Paolo, under pretext of a bad headache, had remained in his room the whole day; not reading, not writing, but restlessly pacing its limits when alone, or lying on the sofa when Thornton was there. Something worse still than headache was the matter with him. He felt ill, sick, and giddy, sometimes to a degree that created a fear lest he should not be able to keep his engagement for the evening. He was painfully haunted, besides, by the idea that he should do or say something foolish if he did go, being well aware that occasionally he lost all control over his thoughts, and, to a certain extent, over his actions. Once he found himself in the ante-room, without the slightest notion of what had taken him there. At another time he fancied he heard the bell ring, and his own name so distinctly pronounced, that he went to ask whether a letter had not been brought for him. Again he could have sworn he heard Miss Jones's voice in the passage.

It was the consciousness of these repeated hallu-

cinations which made him anxious to avoid Thornton, and keep silent in his presence as much as he could. To satisfy his friend, he agreed to take some solid food, and a tray was brought to his room ; but the moment he was alone, the meat was consigned to a closet. When urged to go out, and take a look of the Boulevards or Tuileries, he pleaded fatigue—a plausible enough excuse to pass current with Thornton, who, with all his penetration, did not unfortunately discern the effort in Paolo to appear collected. It was this same want of discernment which made Thornton, out of delicacy, not again insist on accompanying the young man to the Boulevard des Capucines.

Lavinia's maid, as she had been desired, was ready in the hall when Paolo arrived. He took the note she handed to him, and without opening it, he passed her, walking mechanically towards the drawing-room. The young woman followed, trying to make him understand by signs that no one was at home, and pointing to the letter he held in his hand. He tore it open, read the first line, " We are going to the ball at the Hôtel de Ville," paused a second, as if to take in the meaning, violently crushed the paper, and, to the indescribable terror of the poor lady's-maid, tore it with his teeth. His look, his

gesture was that of a maniac. Those few words *had* maddened him.

Down the stairs, up the street. The coach, which had taken him to the Joneses was still at the door; the coachman beckons to him. Paolo sees no one, forgets that there are such things as carriages, forgets everything, except that there is a Hôtel de Ville, and that she is at a ball there.

"The Hôtel de Ville, if you please," he asks, and on he rushes in the direction pointed out. He is neither giddy nor faint now; he has the strength of a Samson. A new-born power swells his heart, hardens his muscles, a power boundless for mischief. Oh! that this world were built on pillars, that he might drag them down, and bury all mankind under the ruins.

Out of a labyrinth of narrow and squalid streets, he emerges at last into an open square, and facing him he beholds the stately pile, its noble front a blaze of light; sentinels on foot and on horseback clearly enough mark the entrance of the palace; carriages are thronging thither. Paolo follows in the wake of the well-dressed crowd, through a vast portico, up a wide staircase, through one of the large folding doors that give access to the ball-rooms. Some one stops him here. "Your ticket, sir."

Paolo hurries on like one on an errand of life and death. Several officials rush after him, overtake him, bring him back, and force him out of the precincts, tabooed to ticketless individuals. Resistance is vain, they are too many for him—ten, a hundred to one. He expostulates, entreats, raves; five minutes, but five minutes, just time enough to seek out one of the guests; to whisper one word in that guest's ear. Compliance with such a request is naturally out of all question, it would be positive disobedience of orders; no ticket, no admittance. They remonstrate with him, humanely enough at first, these moustached figures, then begin to lose patience. "Withdraw quietly, or we shall send you to the guard-house."

At this threat, Paolo forgets that he is one against a multitude, forgets time or place; all, save that he has come to curse Lavinia, and that he will do it in spite of man or devil. He throws himself furiously against his opponents—poor delirious young man! in a second he is overpowered, and carried before the officer of the guard. Luckily for Paolo, he was a grey-haired man, who had been on duty not only at many fêtes, but on many battle-fields. Life's combats and trials had sobered this elderly man, subdued the arrogance of brief martial authority.

The appearance of Paolo reminded him of his own brave lad—just such another in height and carriage—far away in Algeria. The officer puts his arm within Paolo's, and gently reasoning with him, leads him down the stairs, out into the court-yard, out into the open square, and bidding him go home quietly, leaves him there.

Paolo leans against the barrier of iron rails surrounding the huge mansion, and says to himself that there must be more ways than one to get within its walls. No sooner thought, than he sets off on a search, and, in fact, finds a back entrance. It is guarded by soldiers, as in the front; never mind. With the obstinacy of a fixed idea, he steals in, unchallenged, into the interior. With a fluttering heart he springs up a narrow staircase—his hope dies—a group of men are on this landing-place, as they were on that of the principal stair, and equally oppose his further progress. Stopped, questioned, repulsed, he offers his purse only for one peep at the ball-room; it is indignantly refused, and once more comes the threat of the guard-house. Once more he finds himself forced back to the street, conscious only that he is foiled. He wanders round and round the building, but without aim or purpose. Stumbling against a block of stone, he drops on it exhausted.

He sat there, God knows how long, looking at the gaily illuminated façade, listening to the music, his eyes straining after the shadows thrown on the window-blinds by the dancers. He listened, and looked involuntarily, unconsciously, like one too heavy with sleep or drink to understand what he sees or hears. To the orgasm which had supported him hitherto, had succeeded a complete prostration of mind and body. His thoughts floated from object to object, indistinct, incoherent, like the visions of fever. That he was ill, and cold, and wretched past conception—that he was probably dying, and that death would be welcome, was his clearest impression; but of the why of all this wretchedness, he had now not the slightest conception.

On a sudden he was startled by a vivid flash of light in his eyes. A man was holding a lantern close to his face, and a gruff voice was ordering him to rise, and take himself away. He did try to get up, but he was unable; two men put him on his feet, and he strove to walk, but reeled like one drunk with liquor. It was the night patrol who had roused him; they laughed, calling to him that he had had enough. His mind's compass was lost, and, like a wreck, he drifted right or left at hap hazard. Shivering, and in pain, he put up his hand

to his head; his thick hair was like a mass of wet, tangled sea-weed. It was only then he perceived that rain was falling fast, that he had lost his hat, and was literally wet to the skin. The clang of a loud tolling close at hand startled him with a sense of terror; it was the hour of the night falling from the belfry of Notre Dame. Paolo raised his eyes; above him towered a dark mass, which, as he looked, seemed to totter threateningly forwards. He rushed from under the shadow on to a bridge, saw water flowing below, and stopped to wonder and consider whether it could be the Tiber. At the other end of the street, beyond the bridge, a large red ball of fire attracted his attention; he felt fascinated by it, made straight towards it, then—red lamp, and every other thing, even to the last glimmering of consciousness, vanished. He lay senseless on the pavement.

CHAPTER X.

THE GOOD SAMARITANS.

THE glare which had attracted unlucky Paolo, proceeded from a large lamp of red glass, placed in front of a very low shabby house of two stories, that is, of a ground floor surmounted by a garret, one of those ugly interruptions occurring in a long handsome line of buildings, like a warning to the passers-by of the existence of poverty and toil. The red lamp indeed denoted one of those humble establishments, so precious to the less wealthy portion of the community, at which omnibuses stop, to take up or put down passengers, and where correspondence tickets for all parts of Paris may be had for threepence, one of the great improvements of civilization, economising the artisan's and workman's time and strength.

A little man in a lamentably conditioned dressing gown, his little body half out of the garret window, immediately above the waiting room of the said

bureau, was in the act of extinguishing, by the aid of a short stick, the red lamp beneath, when Paolo fell heavily on the pavement.

"Bless my soul," exclaimed the little man, "some one has dropped down close to our door."

"Drunk, I dare say," replied the voice of a woman, coming apparently from some recess within the garret chamber. "Shut the window at once, Prosper, it is desperately cold."

"Drunk or not drunk," observed good-naturedly the said Prosper, as he obeyed the order to shut the window, "the wet pavement is no bed for one of God's creatures in this bitter night; one would not willingly leave a dog there. I'll go and see." And quickly descending what was more like a ladder than a staircase, he opened the door of the office, went where Paolo was lying, and stooping to the level of the prostrate figure's face, after a few seconds of examination, exclaimed, "He is not drunk, poor fellow, but ill; perhaps he's subject to fits. Holla! Prudence, come, and give me a hand."

This request was addressed to a female clothed in a woollen petticoat and jacket, who had followed on Prosper's heels, as a good and curious wife should always do, and was standing shivering on the threshold of her home. Prudence without hesitation

stepped out, and husband and wife struggled to lift Paolo's inanimate form, a task, however, to which they were unequal. "We might as well try to move the Colonne Vendôme," said the panting little Prosper; "he'd do for a cuirassier of the guard. I must fetch Benoît."

Benoît was Prosper's godfather and acknowledged Mentor, a man who knew everything, could do everything, and was always and inevitably right. He lived at some baths near at hand, where he ruled supreme over the vapour and douches department. Mr. Prosper hobbled along a little way in a straight line, turned into a narrow lane to the left, then into a narrow lane to the right, stopped at a window with shutters, in the centre of which was a loophole protected by an iron grating. Here Mr. Prosper knocked a *réveillé* with his knuckles, calling loudly on Benoît.

"*Présent*," growled a husky voice within, followed by a shuffling of slippers, which seemed to indicate that the owner of the husky voice was coming to answer the summons; when, all of a sudden, the shuffling ceased, and was succeeded by a brisk stamping of feet, and angry bursts of "One—two—three—floored—*quoi?*"

"Come, come," urged Prosper, familiar with the

amiable weakness of Benoît, who was for ever at quarte and tierce with an imaginary foe, "you can finish him to-morrow; just now, we want you at the shop; make haste, I can't wait for you;" and Prosper limped away, but was overtaken almost immediately by Benoît. The combined strength of the trio enabled them to half drag, half carry Paolo into the waiting-room, and lay him on the floor. Prudence fastened the outer door, and then ran upstairs for a pillow. Benoît scrutinized the still insensible form with an intensely wise and critical air, and Prosper examined Benoît with the devoted look of a dog at his master.

"It is a case of cholera," dogmatically pronounced Benoît.

"Cholera!" exclaimed husband and wife, turning the colour of ashes.

"Of cholera," repeated Benoît; "don't you see how black he is becoming in the face? and how stiff and cold his lower limbs are? The blood is frozen up to the young fellow's waist, I tell you. As soon as his heart freezes, there's an end of him."

"God have mercy on us all," said the woman; "we can't keep him here, the children will catch it and die; he must go to the hospital,

do you hear, Prosper? It is only a step; *allons donc*."

"Ah, very well," said Benoît; "then the boy's dead—dead, I say, twice over before you get him admitted. I know their ways. Ten minutes of a vapour douche at my place, and he is cured—cured I say; but I have no fire, and no fire no vapour, and there's an end of it."

"But, but, what then do you advise, *par-rain*?" asked Prosper, with an appealing look at Benoît.

"Advise, hein?—why, that we do our best, and — à la garde de Dieu," quoth Benoît. "You two bring down a mattress, and put some sticks in the stove, while I run to my place. We shall want plenty of hot water presently."

The mattress was ready, and the wood was crackling in the wretched stove, when Benoît returned. He had some difficulty this time in making good his entrance, so enormously was his bulk increased by the amount of blankets, which, to carry more conveniently, he had wrapped round his person. Necessity in this case had been the mother of invention, for, holding in one hand a black bottle, in the other a big scrubbing-brush, and in his mouth a short *brûle-gueule*, unlit indeed,

but out of which he sent puffs of imaginary smoke: how otherwise could he have brought the blankets?

"There," said he, shaking off his cumbersome envelope, and making a feint or two at the wall with the scrubbing-brush, "we must make our invalid a bed fit for a Christian to lie on;" and he began spreading the blankets on the mattress. "Ha, ha, but not here, now that I think of it, or we shall have to shift his quarters in the morning—*mon Dieu!* what it is to have a head on one's shoulders. Better take him into your *salle-à-manger*, out of the way of your customers."

Without waiting for any assent, Benoît snatched up mattress and blankets, and forthwith carried them into what he had dignified into a *salle-à-manger*, but which in fact was kitchen and hall for the family. The waiting-room, or "shop," as Benoît called it invariably, this kitchen, and two garret rooms, constituted Mr. Prosper's dwelling.

"Now, for the boy himself," cried Benoît; "take his feet, *fillet*!—no, no, madame, this is not woman's work; my godson and I can manage it." But Prudence, whether better acquainted with her husband's powers, or from the indomitable charity of a woman's heart, forgot her fears of infection,

and insisted on lending a hand to carry the "boy," and lay him gently on the mattress, first divesting him of his wet garments. Benoît, in his glory, then administered a professional rubbing that might have forced heat into marble, after which he wrapped Paolo in all the blankets, placed bottles full of hot water to his feet and to his back, and poured down his throat, spoonful by spoonful, a considerable dose of hot cognac and water. When all this had been accomplished, Benoît went and sat down by the stove, lighted his pipe, and now filling the room with real volumes of pungent vapour, gravely watched for the effects of his curative method on his patient.

Let us have patience enough for Benoît's simple story. Benoît was what is called an *enfant de Paris*. He had enlisted at the age of eighteen, and seen a good deal of active service both in France and Algeria. He had risen to the rank of sergeant, and the stripes on his sleeve would have been exchanged for the golden epaulettes on the shoulder, had Benoît not been so illiterate. His skill as a swordsman had made him respected and feared throughout his military career, and caused him to be appointed *maître d'armes* to his regiment, a fact which explains his fencing monomania. At forty

he had obtained his discharge, and settling in Paris, he had ever since been a sort of jack-of-all-trades. Prosper, his godson, had met the ex-sergeant in a moment when the latter's fortunes were at a very low ebb. The good-natured little fellow had assisted his godfather as far as his means allowed, and by dint of seeking and being in earnest, had succeeded in finding the employment, tolerably lucrative, if not enviable, which that worthy now fulfilled at a thermal establishment close by ;—we say *not enviable*, because Benoît's duties involved the necessity of living in a temperature of between 110 degs. and 120 degs. Fahrenheit.

This timely service had strengthened the ties, rather loose hitherto, between godfather and godson. There was nothing that Benoît would not do for Prosper, as there was nothing that Prosper would not do for Benoît. Benoît was actuated by gratitude, Prosper by admiration. Benoît had all the strong and the weak points of a trooper ; he was serviceable, generous, warm-hearted, but hot-headed, touchy, despotic and intolerant ; ready to share his last crust with an old comrade, or to cut that comrade's throat on the slightest provocation. In personal appearance, Benoît was tall, lean, sinewy ; time had thinned his flowing locks, but he balanced

their loss by wearing enormous grey moustaches, and a large tuft on his chin. Though upwards of fifty, his strength and activity were proverbial in the neighbourhood; first baked by the sun in Africa, and then boiled by the steam of the Paris establishment of baths, in which he now lived, he had become equally impervious to cold and heat. The prominent items of his costume in all seasons, consisted of a pair of slippers, a blouse, and a long apron. In the same clothes in which he administered a *douche* at the temperature of 40 degs. Réaumur, he would walk out in the street when the thermometer was at 15 degs. below zero. Such was the strange doctor assigned by fate to Paolo.

At last, after more than an hour of perfect insensibility, Paolo began to give some signs of returning animation, first by a series of stifled moans, then by repeated but weak efforts to rid himself of his load of covering, and to change his position. Any one, except a man so obstinate and self-conceited as Benoit, would have understood these manifestations of discomfort; on the contrary, the ex-sergeant welcomed every one of these movements, by digging his elbow into poor little Prosper's sides, chuckling with triumph, and exclaiming now and then, "Do you see, the blood is thawing; well

done, *mon garçon*,—a little faster if you can.” As if in obedience to this wish, “my boy’s” pulse went at a racing gallop, until Benoît would fain have slackened the speed, had he known how. Paolo’s feeble attempts at motion soon changed into a constant jerk from right to left, from left to right. The more the restless sufferer strove to throw the blankets from him, the more strenuously did Benoît insist on covering him.

By four in the morning Paolo had become almost unmanageable, either sitting bolt upright, staring round him with bloodshot eyes, or springing off the mattress in a way, which the united exertions of the three persons present could scarcely control. When things had come to this pass, Prudence, notwithstanding her habitual reverence for Benoît, proposed that one of them should fetch Mr. Perrin. Prosper said “Ay,” and Benoît “No,” grounding his opposition on his experience of cholera, as great or greater than that of Mr. Perrin. Mr. Perrin had never been out of Paris. What more could Mr. Perrin do than he, Benoît, had done? But Prudence was not to be pacified without Mr. Perrin, so Benoît yielded with a significant shrug of the shoulders, saying, “Let the woman have her way.” Without further remark, Prudence put

on a faded tartan shawl and went to seek Mr. Perrin.

Mr. Perrin was one of the resident physicians (*internes*) of the Hôtel Dieu, who visited much among the poor in that neighbourhood, and was deservedly most popular in the class, from which he had himself sprung. The son of a postman, he was familiar with the hardships, the wants, the peculiar language of what are called the lower orders, and was always ready at their bidding. This good man had come out of Nature's hand short, thin, sickly, fallow, and so shortsighted that he could not see the top of his own nose without spectacles. Early deprivations, and the daily sight of human misery, had rendered him grey, grim, withered, old before his time.

The Hôtel Dieu was not more than one minute's walk from Prosper's bureau, being in fact, exactly opposite. As soon as he heard Prudence's story, Mr. Perrin begged one of his colleagues to take his place in case of need, put on his overcoat, and in less time than it takes to say so, was standing by Paolo's sick bed, watch in hand, his experienced finger interrogating the rapid pulse, his look grave and inscrutable, like that of Destiny itself.

"He is half smothered," observed Mr. Perrin, relieving the sick man of all but one of the numerous blankets.

"Is it—cholera?" asked Prudence.

"Cholera? nonsense," said the physician. "You dream of nothing but cholera. I almost wish it was. This is a case of cerebral congestion, brought on by God knows what, heightened and helped by brandy, and blankets, and hot bottles. I want a basin, and a pair of scissors."

Even Benoit was cowed by the doctor's earnest manner, and swallowed the protest which rose on his lips against this fiat.

Mr. Perrin, with lancet in hand, said to Prudence, who brought him the basin and scissors,—

"Now, madame, take a basket and a tumbler with you, if you please, and go to the surgery of the Hôtel Dieu, ask for a couple of dozen of leeches, and eight kilos of ice. Say it is for Dr. Perrin; you needn't pay—just now."

By the time that Prudence came back with the leeches and the ice, the patient had been bled—a difficult task it had been to keep him still for that purpose, he raved so—and all his fine hair had also been cut off. The doctor wrapped some of the ice in a cloth, and applied it to Paolo's head, giving

directions at the same time that similar applications should be unremittingly continued.

"As to the leeches," he went on, "if the gentleman is not quieter in two hours, which is not very likely, put a dozen behind each ear. You'll put them on at seven," he added, consulting his watch. "I shall be here at eight, and, if it be possible, we will have him removed to the hospital."

"With your leave, doctor," inquired Prudence, "is this cerebral combustion anything catching?"

"Not in the least," replied Mr. Perrin, with a smile; "why do you ask?"

"Because," explained Prudence, with some embarrassment, "if there is no danger for the children, we could nurse the poor fellow here very well."

"Thought and spoken like a good woman, and a true woman," said the doctor, with another smile, which made him look quite young and handsome; "but you must consider, madame, that this young man's malady, though not infectious, may have other serious consequences for you: first, it may end fatally——"

"I am sure it will not," put in Prudence.

"And secondly," pursued the doctor, "supposing, as you say, he recovers, his illness is certain to be long, troublesome, and expensive."

"As to time, I have plenty of that to give," urged Prudence; "as to money——"

"Well, we have not much to boast of in that way," says Prosper, striking into the conversation, "but we have a little credit, and——"

"And some friends," growled Benoît, significantly.

"We'll discuss the matter further by and by," said Mr. Perrin. "In the meantime, don't forget to use the ice freely, and, if he is not better, the leeches at seven, twelve behind each ear: *à bientôt*. By the by," said the doctor, returning, "let me see the young man's clothes."

They were produced by Prudence. The doctor inspected them, with a view to the identification of his patient, but no clue of the sort came of the inspection; there was neither card-case nor pocket-book, nor letters, nor purse, in the pockets—nothing but a white handkerchief marked P., and a pair of black gloves. The only conclusion Mr. Perrin was able to draw from the fineness of the linen, and the cut and stuff of the clothes, was that this unexpected customer of his was what is called a gentleman.

Paolo's restlessness, which had abated a little in consequence of the bleeding, having reappeared

long before the hour of seven, Benoît, who was really a capital hand at dressing of wounds and all that sort of thing, had recourse to the leeches, but with an air of gloomy incredulity, meant to express "all time lost."

The cold gray March morning's light, which was now beginning to peep into the *salle-à-manger* of the omnibus establishment, gave the signal of retreat to the ruler of the neighbouring vapour and douche department. He went, uttering those peculiar ominous sounds of the lips, with which people mark their apprehensions. Prosper on his side, was taking down the shutters, and preparing for an active day after an active night, when in came Mr. Perrin again. He seemed rather satisfied with the state of his patient, and said nothing more of his removal.

The doctor called twice during the day, and again in the evening, bleeding Paolo at his first and last visit. Very grave and thoughtful Mr. Perrin looked. Prudence never left the sick room, and Prosper spent there all the shreds of time, and they were not many, which the exigencies of his calling left at his disposal. If Benoît rushed over once for news, he must have done so at least fifty times. Though he was to relieve Prosper's watch

at three in the morning, behold him in the "shop" at near midnight, the hour when he had a right to consider himself released from the service of the public. Gradually, as the day had waned, so had his suspicious, dissatisfied mood insensibly merged into the patronising, with a good dash of the maudlin, witness the mysterious assumption of importance, with which he drew Prosper into a corner, and dropped a dirty paper ball containing three napoleons into his hand, and the burst of sensibility, which caused him in so doing to lay his head on Prosper's shoulder, and with sobs to exclaim,—

"It will serve for his burial, poor boy, it will serve for his burial."

Prosper silently pocketed the money, perceiving from the combined flavour of tobacco, and *petits verres*, exhaling from his worthy godfather's lips, that he had reached that stage of concentrated self-will, when a word of contradiction would have driven the old soldier to frenzy.

When her husband closed the bureau, Prudence went to take some rest in her garret, and Prosper laid himself down on a paillasse at the foot of the sick man's mattress. And now we may as well leave this scene of suffering and benevolence for

a while, with the less fear of any untoward accident occurring in our absence, that Paolo is by far too interesting a personage in our story, to be conveniently spared before the end.

CHAPTER XI.

SEARCH.

WE must now go back to the night of Paolo's second visit to the Joneses. When at half-past eleven he had not returned, Thornton began to feel uneasy lest his young friend should have lost his way in the huge city. Nothing more natural than that Paolo, in the state of pre-occupation in which he was, should have forgotten the name of the street where he lodged, and, supposing that he had not lost it, forgotten that he was carrying his address written down on a card in his waistcoat pocket. After all, he may be still with those people, soliloquized Thornton; they keep late hours, and, in all probability, they had other visitors beside Paolo. No doubt he is there: however, the shortest way to certainty is to go and see.

First informing Madame Françoise of his inten-

tion, and begging her not to sit up for him herself, Thornton departed. One o'clock was striking as he stepped out of a citadine at 25, Boulevard des Capucines; he rang the bell and made straight for the porter's lodge. Monsieur the concierge was snoring in his bed, madame his spouse taking a nap in a large arm-chair.

"Monsieur et Madame Jones, if you please?"

Madame la concierge was out of sorts, of course, as all Parisian concierges are always, but more especially after midnight, and knew of no such name as Jones.

"Pardon," said Mortimer, fumbling in his pocket, I mean an English family."

"We have but one," grumbled the female cerberus; "a pretty time to pay visits."

"Monsieur is too gracious," coo'd the worthy matron, on receipt of a five-franc piece. "I am at monsieur's service. If all the world were like monsieur! but they are not reasonable, indeed they aren't."

"An English family consisting of three persons," resumed Mortimer; "a tall gentleman upwards of forty——"

"And a short elderly lady, as round as a ball," interrupted the portress;—"Madame Jonasse—I

know them, I know them; second floor above the entresol. Always late, just come in."

"Have they been out?" inquired Mortimer, breathless with surprise.

"It is their rule, monsieur; and a pretty fuss they made both in going out and coming in, with this into the bargain, that they brought the fat one home in a swoon."

"A young gentleman must have called on them about nine o'clock. Pray," continued Thornton, almost beseechingly—"pray try and recollect whether it was before or after they went out."

"Nobody came for the Jonasses this evening, except a lady—Madame la Générale,—what's her name? She came to fetch them apparently, for they all set off together. I am positive I drew the cordon for no gentleman, young or old; perhaps Antoine did. I say, Antoine, *mon ami*——"

Mortimer begged the porter's lady not to trouble her snoring husband, she had told him pretty nearly all that he cared to know. His heart foreboded some disaster, as he ran up the stairs to the second floor. He forgot all the awkwardness of calling up a family of strangers at that hour. He had scarcely touched the bell before the door opened.

"Is that the doctor?" cried a voice from within;

and before Mortimer had taken two steps forward into the anteroom, out rushed Miss Jones from a door opposite. "Oh, Mr. Thornton," she exclaimed, "what of Signor Paolo?"

"I came here to put the same question to you," said Thornton. "He has not returned to the hotel."

"Not returned to the hotel? You don't know where he is?" and Lavinia wrung her hands.

"I don't know where he is," said Thornton. "Have you not seen him? Surely, you waited for him at home."

"I didn't, I could not," replied the poor girl; "I left a note to explain everything to him. My maid says he read it, did not speak a word, but went away in a sort of hurry, and looking angry."

Thornton, with a gesture of terror, exclaimed,—

"What folly, what cruelty! you don't know what you have done."

"Oh! Mr. Thornton, don't speak to me in that way just now; don't, for God's sake, upbraid me. It is all come upon me at once. Aunt is so ill."

A violent pull at the bell interrupted the speakers. This time it was the doctor in company with the man who had gone in search of him.

"Don't go away till I come back," said Lavinia

to Thornton, as she showed the physician into Mrs. Jones's room.

Thornton sat down to wait, trying hard to think of some clue as to where Paolo could have gone. It might be, that under the smart of bitter disappointment, Paolo had walked straight before him, without thinking of where he was going, seeking relief in movement; and in that moment he most likely lay somewhere exhausted; it might be that, in an access of despair—Thornton shrunk from clearly articulating, even in thought, the last hypothesis, which suggested itself to him. Paolo's fate would depend on the degree of excitement under which he might have been labouring, and Thornton lacked the data on which to ground any adequate estimate of his poor friend's previous state of mind. Bitterly did he reproach himself for having allowed the Italian, a stranger to Paris, and in such peculiar circumstances, to go out alone at night.

Miss Jones returned to the anteroom more discomposed than when she had left it. The doctor had tried in vain to restore Mrs. Jones's consciousness; he was now about to have recourse to bleeding her in the foot. Lavinia had but a minute to spare. Mortimer made the most of it, to put questions and elicit answers. Thus he learned much

that we already know, but to him quite new; for instance, the *contretemps* which had attended Paolo's first visit, and the shock he had then received. Lavinia also told him, more at length, the description her maid had given her of Paolo's manner when the note was handed to him; first, as if he did not comprehend what he was to do with it, his mute rage when he did read it, and the wild look in his eyes, when he turned away into the street. All this formed a chain of evidence so decisive in Thornton's opinion, that he could not restrain the exclamation of, "Then it's all over with him."

"Don't say so; don't say so, for pity's sake," implored the distracted girl; "how can you be sure he is not waiting at your hotel?"

Thornton took compassion on her, and feigned a hope that he did not entertain, or, to speak more to the point, believed he did not entertain. There was no time for further discussion. Upon the understanding that any fresh information which might reach either of them should be immediately communicated to the other, they separated.

Thornton had the moral certainty that he should not find Paolo waiting for him; he would not have hesitated to have wagered his fortune, his life, that he should not find him; and yet, when his anticipa-

tion was realized, his heart sank within him, just the same as if it had been full to the brim with the most sanguine expectations. Having read in his troubled looks, that he was uneasy at his young friend's protracted absence, his landlady had sat up for him, in spite of his request to the contrary. Thornton was too thankful now to have some one to advise with, not to confess that he had been on a fruitless errand, together with such circumstances of the case, as might justify his fears, without, as he supposed, compromising any third person. Madame Françoise was not a woman for nothing; she divined all that Thornton withheld, but with more than usual discretion kept her discovery to herself, while she gave solid, good advice. Two o'clock in the morning is not the hour best calculated to institute inquiries about missing friends; however, madame recollected having heard, that at the prefecture of police, there was a *bureau de permanence*, that is, an office kept open all night for the convenience of such persons as might happen to require instantaneous help from the municipal powers. Mortimer grasped eagerly at this information, and, accompanied by Madame Françoise, he set out at once for the prefecture of police.

It was not without difficulty that they were ad-

mitted within its gloomy precincts, and even after that was accomplished, it was only by dint of perseverance in questioning every policeman on watch, that they at last obtained the necessary directions how to reach the office they were in search of. The prefecture of police, be it observed, independently of the associations it evokes, has, or rather had, a particular frown of its own, which is anything but attractive, even in the glare of day. By the lurid light of flickering gas-lamps, on a stormy night in March, it was forcibly suggestive of Limbos, and Dantesque bolgias,—an illustration of darkness visible. Mortimer felt his blood grow chill in his veins, as he thought him that Paolo might have been taken up as a vagabond, and might possibly be in one of yonder cells with iron gratings. A low archway was pointed out to Thornton and his companion, and they were told that, passing through it, they would find themselves opposite to a door, which door gave access to the *bureau de permanence*. Following these directions, they were speedily in a spacious room, so faintly illuminated, that the eye required some time to get accustomed to the semi-obscurity, in order to discern that the three or four heaps strewed over the floor were so many human beings. Lying at full length on wooden inclined planes, or *lits de camp*, these

human beings were, in fact, *sergens de ville*, one of whom asked the intruders their business there, and on being told that they desired to speak to the police inspector for the night, once more asked if the case was one that pressed. Mortimer having replied in the affirmative, the *sergent* who had been spokesman, got up, knocked at a door, went in, and returning almost instantly, bid the two visitors enter.

A military-looking gentleman, whose rather disordered attire, and half awakened appearance, testified to interrupted slumbers, was seated at a table, on which stood conspicuous a capacious ledger. His features would have been commonplace, but for the eyes, which were intensely quick and searching. He motioned his visitors to seats, and listened to Thornton's short statement in unbroken silence, then said,—

“Have you any positive reason for believing that the young man in question meditated self-destruction?”

Mortimer hesitated an instant, then replied, that positive reason he had not, but that he knew the young man to be capable at a given moment of taking any, and extreme resolutions into the bargain.

"I don't ask of what he may be capable or not at a given moment," observed the sharp-eyed officer; "my question is, has he been, to your knowledge, actually contemplating suicide?"

Mortimer recoiled from entering on the multiplicity of details, and the sort of dissection of Paolo's heart, which alone could have given the police superintendent a clue to the probable frame of the missing young man's mind on leaving the Boulevard des Capucines, and replied,—

"I cannot take upon me to say that I believe he had any such intention when he parted from me."

"Then," subjoined the night inspector, "I cannot consider this a case of emergency, or one in which delay might be fatal. We are here only for such. A few hours' absence could never justify my putting the public force in motion. Paris swarms with places, in which a young man may spend a night with no other danger than to his purse and health. If we were to humour the alarms of parents or other relatives, natural enough, to be sure, though nine times in ten groundless, there would be no end of useless trouble provided for us. The line must be drawn somewhere. Should this young man not return home to-morrow, renew your appli-

cation before evening, and you will receive, in the ordinary course of business, such assistance as we can afford." So saying, the night inspector rose, and civilly bowed his visitors away. The Parisian is essentially polite, and, let it be said to his honour, whenever he is forced to meet a request with a refusal, or communicate anything little agreeable to hear, rarely aggravates the annoyance by any omission in point of form.

Thornton never closed his eyes that night, and went much earlier than necessary to renew his application at a particular office, which had been pointed out to him as the one most eligible for his business. He wrote down, as desired, the name and description of the missing Paolo, the last place he knew he had been at, gave his own name and actual place of abode, and received the assurance that all possible diligence should be used in tracing out Mr. Mancini, and in conveying to the applicant Mr. Thornton whatever information might be gathered.

Thornton offered money as a stimulant for the search, but his offer was declined for the present; perhaps, at a later stage of the proceedings, he was told, he might be called on to defray some extraordinary expenses. He was advised also to

advertise his missing friend in the newspapers, a step of which he had already bethought himself.

From the prefecture of police, he repaired, at Madame Françoise's suggestion, to an agency of publicity in the Place de la Bourse, where an article was concocted and immediately sent for publication to the leading newspapers, embodying the name, country and personal description of the missing individual, concluding with the promise of a large reward to any one who should convey to Rue de Rohan, No. 1, any information that should lead to a discovery.

Thornton went next, God knows with what heart, to the Morgue, and, by means of a handsome gratuity to the president of that lugubrious establishment, secured the certainty of an immediate summons, should anybody be brought there whose appearance in the least corresponded with the description he left. Madame Françoise accompanied the English gentleman on all these expeditions, being most especially useful in smoothing away, with her womanly tact, that host of minor difficulties, and microscopic jarrings, which a man of Thornton's misanthropic turn, little relying, and not caring to dissemble how little, on the benevolence of his fellow-creatures, could not fail to create for him.

Having thus done all that his judgment suggested, Mortimer drove back, wearied and worn out, body and mind alike, to the hotel, where he found a note from Miss Lavinia awaiting him. It said,—

“Aunt has recovered her consciousness, but lost her speech: judge of my state. I know not what to answer to her anxious looks—mute inquiries I am sure they are about Signor Mancini; your silence tells me clearly that you have got no clue yet. I entreat you, in common charity, to come to me. I long to know what you have done, what you hope, what you fear. I am so miserable that I feel entitled even to your indulgence.

“L. J.”

Thornton went to her, and, heart-broken as he was, tried to comfort her. He had all but detested her in her days of flightiness and successful beauty; repentant and bowed down, he felt for her. Thornton had less in him of the misanthropist than he believed.

Thus days and weeks passed on with little or no change. Mortimer called every day at the Boulevard des Capucines; was shortly admitted to

the sick chamber, and arranged a tolerably probable story about Paolo, a sudden call to Rome, connected with the sale of his great picture of Brennus—which the invalid's enfeebled state of mind thankfully accepted for truth. Mrs. Jones, in fact, had had a stroke of palsy, her left side was paralyzed, and her mental powers were also slightly affected. For the rest, she was going on as favourably as could be hoped, and had partially recovered her speech. Paolo's fate continued an impenetrable mystery. Thornton caused copies of the advertisement inserted in the newspapers, to be separately printed in huge letters, and placarded far and wide over the walls of Paris; he set detectives to work, paying them liberally, and further stimulating their zeal by the promise of a fabulous *pourboire* in the event of success. All was to no purpose. He received indeed an avalanche of written communications, most of them circulars from different tradespeople or associations, who, putting to profit the knowledge of his address, urged on him, the one their merchandise, the other their shares. However, of the correspondence that was anonymous, some nine out of ten of the notes bore reference at least to the subject of the advertisement. One was to the effect, that if Thornton would go on

such a day, at such an hour, to such a place, he would hear all about the frightful tragedy ; another was to the purport, that if a bank-note of twenty pounds were sent by post to such an address, the writer of the letter would call on the advertiser, and conduct him to the house where the missing youth was forcibly detained ; a third gave the information that the young Roman had been seen last near the Forest de Bondy riding on a broomstick, and so on. There are wits so witty that every circumstance affords a field for their talents. After a few fruitless essays made in person, Thornton, as advised, handed to the police all such communications, out of which, of course, nothing came.

Thornton's spirits sank under the futility of his every effort ; indeed, the intensity of his depression, after the departure of the Joneses for England, fairly frightened Madame Françoise. Mrs. Jones, ever since her last attack of illness, had never ceased sighing for England, as if England were to be her panacea. No sooner did the physicians withdraw their veto to her travelling, than the family set off for London. Great as the deprivation was for Mortimer, it bore still harder on Lavinia, who, as the prospect before her darkened apace, grew

every day more alive to the value of a real friend, the more precious too that Thornton was also *his* friend. Thornton, on his side, lost in Lavinia the only creature that suited him in his forlorn condition, the only heart that could sympathize in full with him, the only safety-valve from his lapsing into despair. Lavinia gone, he felt alone in the world.

Madame Françoise watched with daily increasing disquietude his haggard looks, his long fits of absence of mind, his starts of feverish, useless activity, and by-and-by a terror seized upon her lest he should lose his reason. So greatly had his misery impressed her, that when the long-expected notice to quit her premises within a week, was served on her, the good woman had not the courage to abandon him to himself, and at once resolved to put off to a better time the realization of her cherished plan of going to live with her married daughter at Evreux. Instead of that, she secured comfortable apartments for Mr. Thornton and herself at a lady friend's, who kept a *maison garnie* in the Rue Neuve des Augustins. As soon as they were installed there, new advertisements and new placards were printed and issued, in order to give the advertiser's new address. The police also, the

man in charge of the Morgue, and Miss Jones, now in London, were duly informed of the change. Mortimer did all this scrupulously but without any spirit, like one who discharges a duty for conscience-sake, but hopes no result from it.

CHAPTER XII.

PAOLO'S PROGRESS.

It is mortifying and appalling to think how little may suffice to defeat the best-laid scheme. Here is a case in point. The combined resources of a well organized police, and of a system of publicity, spreading the knowledge of a fact far and wide through every grade of the population, the two great engines and contrivances of modern civilization, kept at bay, or rather put to nought by one or two insignificant circumstances, which an adept in the calculation of probabilities would have disdained to cast up in his reckoning. Thus it now and then happens that a machine, most ingeniously devised on the most irrefragable principles, does not answer in practice: owing to what?—to a slight friction which has been overlooked.

Prosper and his wife saw no daily paper. Benoît, scarcely able to spell, never resorted to reading.

Mr. Perrin, the only person about Paolo likely to interest himself in the news of the day, had systematically given up all periodicals, save those of his craft, which had no advertisements but medical ones. Thus far newspapers had no hold on our hero's surroundings. Nor had placards any better chance with people who, like the omnibus check-taker and his wife, never left their domicile either by night or day, and in whose immediate neighbourhood, supposing them occasionally to have strayed into the street, no bills were or could be put up; for the suite of shops on either side of Mr. Prosper's establishment, and the low parapet opposite, that is, on the side overlooking the river, afforded no space for the labours of the bill-sticker. Prosper's establishment, if the reader recollects, was situated on the Quai Montebello, opposite Notre Dame. Mr. Perrin, when out of doors, was constantly pre-occupied with the cases of his patients, and, above all, too short-sighted to have noticed the huge sheets of printed paper, even had they been half as large again; and as to Benoît, his five minutes' walk from what he called his "den" to Prosper's "shop," lay through narrow unfrequented lanes, where nothing but the internal interests of those lanes ever excited attention. Remained that quickest and

surest conductor of all news, the unrivalled trumpeter, gossip ; but indulgence in gossip, whether actively or passively, presupposes leisure, and life was such a continual race to each and all of Paolo's attendants, more especially since he had fallen among them, that they had no time to spare for gossip, even without taking into account a circumstance which had closed their lips against the but too natural itching to impart confidentially, each to a few bosom friends, the portentous intelligence of the handsome stranger picked up in the street, and ever since the tenant of Mr. Prosper's back parlour.—

During his first and second night under that Samaritan's roof, Paolo had raved a good deal in an unfamiliar jargon, which Benoît had oracularly pronounced to be Polish, but which the better informed Mr. Perrin declared to be Italian. Now Benoît had been quartered at Pont du Var in 1833, and with his own eyes had beheld many an Italian come from the opposite shore to seek a refuge on French soil. Benoît had served in Africa, and there known more than one Italian refugee in the foreign legion. Benoît had also got acquainted in Paris with Italian exiles ; and whether in Paris, Algeria, or the Pont du Var, had invariably seen

them roughly handled, narrowly watched by the police, now and then sent to prison, or uncere-
moniously despatched to the nearest frontier under
an escort of gendarmes. Benoit's experience on this
particular matter had crystalized itself into two
distinct axioms: first, that Italian and refugee were
one and the same thing; second, that the police had
permanent orders to track out Italians, with a view
to their expulsion or imprisonment. Applying his
profound wisdom to Paolo's case, Benoit, after various
thrusts at his imaginary adversary, addressed the
following short and striking oration to Prosper and
his wife,—

“*Motus!* the lad is an Italian; you know what
that means; shut up your lips, or, '*cré nom*, we shall
have the police and all the *bataclan* down on us
here.”

The matter had been referred on the morrow
to Mr. Perrin, who had shrugged his shoulders
without saying yes or no. As the proverb, “Silence
is acquiescence,” was known to the applicants, they
all accordingly held their tongues. Thus it came
to pass, that, chance aiding and abetting, police,
newspapers, placards, and even the clangor of
gossip's big trumpet, were set at defiance. Paolo's
whereabouts continued hid as if it were a crime.

The hand-to-hand struggle between fever and the lancet was long and fierce, and more than once did the doctor's leaden-coloured face, on the reappearance of symptoms supposed to be conquered, turn of a cadaverous green. When the enemy was at length put to flight, it left behind a ruin, a wreck, a corpse you would say, but for that thin vapour issuing from his lips on the mirror, the only proof of yet unsuspended vitality. For fully three weeks life oscillated and flickered like a torch in the wind; after that it began to burn slowly but regularly again. Paolo was declared out of danger, another fortnight, and he had entered the phase of convalescence.

One of the inevitable consequences of any acute disease which has its seat in the brain, is that of a period, more or less long and intense, according to the duration and intensity of the disorder—a period, we say, of torpidity and sluggishness in the cerebral sensorium, and the functions dependent on it, which sometimes amounts to temporary imbecility. Such was the case with Paolo. Life was certainly fast regaining its hold of him, but animal life alone; the sentient being, the Psyche, lay still asleep. He would sit up on his bed, and for hours stare vacantly at the wall, chequered by some stray sunbeam, or

play with the children, as thoughtless and unconcerned as a child himself. Whenever Prudence, Prosper, Benoît, or Mr. Perrin came into his room, he always smiled good-naturedly, but never spoke unless first spoken to, and then only in monosyllables, never asked questions, never evinced the least sign of surprise or curiosity at the strangeness of the place he was in. The only occurrences which appeared to arouse his interest, were his meals, which he ate with great relish. When able to leave his bed, he would sit for half the day in an arm-chair at the window of the back room, and watch with the same mute delight the manœuvres of a sparrow, or the movements of Benoît, lording it over baths and douches at the bottom of the court-yard opposite, and looking, as he moved amid thick volumes of smoke, much like a droll representation of a half-marine, half-infernal deity.

See him next by the side of Prosper's official desk, promoted to the stirring joys of the waiting room, and ready to applaud the bustle of the scene.

It's like a sea-port, is it not?" chuckles the little omnibus official, nudging the invalid; "no wonder there's such a competition; find me another conveyance, combining cheerfulness, comfort and speed, ready to take you to *any* part of the town at any

moment of the day or night. You'll see it yourself as soon as you are strong enough for a drive; and remember the company is always respectable—lawyers, physicians, merchants, employés, rentiers, not to speak of people of rank like that grey-haired gentleman opposite, with a red rosette in his button-hole—an officer of the Legion of Honour, very likely a general in plain clothes; an officer, not a chevalier of the order—chevaliers wear a red ribbon. Look at those horses now;”and Prosper, whistle in hand, would slap the powerful animals on the neck, accompanying the caress with a side glance at Paolo, which meant to say, “Did you ever see horseflesh equal to that?” The *esprit de corps* which prompts us to make much of the banner under which we serve, must be strong indeed, that even this poor, ill-paid, ill-lodged, ill-warmed drudge should put his pride in a concern which made him such a scanty return.

Then followed the days of those beautiful drives in Mr. Prosper's omnibus, and those long sittings in the mild spring sun in the Jardin des Plantes, or in the Tuileries, with Madame Prudence by his side, to give him treats of *galette ad libitum*; then came strolls, gradually lengthening, in the one garden or the other, where gentle-looking old men and women would stop, gaze at him wistfully, and observe

to each other, in passing, "Poor lad, how weak he looks; ah! youth, after all, is no buckler against illness." Perhaps memory brought him back now and then a momentary whiff of the past; the image of a tall, black-haired girl, of a tall, grey-haired gentleman—images faded as the personages of a tale read long ago, and more than half forgotten. But it was so much trouble to think and try to recollect, so as to put in colour into those vague outlines, that he was fain at once to let them slip away. How far easier and more agreeable to watch those beautiful lions crouching down, majestic even in the captivity of their cages; those restless monkeys, for ever playing mischievous tricks to each other, startled into a second's immobility by the bells they had unconsciously set ringing in their gambols; or to gaze on the reflection of the sun playing in the rippling waters of the great basin in the Tuileries, and making them into an endless cascade of sapphires and rubies.

One evening he was on the *Terrasse aux Bords de l'Eau*, when the setting sun had dyed the noble river below a Tyrian purple. Paolo was looking at this never-tiring spectacle, when his attention was attracted by a small steamer issuing from below the bridge *De la Concorde*, and in its onward course

leaving behind a long white panache of smoke. Paolo watched with unusual eagerness the progress of the little craft, until he saw it stopped and moored in front of the Pont Royal. This sight stirred up a confused recollection of a similar scene, a scene he had witnessed somewhere; was it lately, or long ago? A scene in which the setting sun, a large expanse of water, and a big steamer, with Thornton on its deck, figured. He hesitated, then said in an excited manner, pointing to the steamer,—

“Thornton is there.”

It was the first time, since his illness, that the name and figure of Thornton had risen up clearly in his recollection. That evening Paolo, with the air of one imparting a solemn secret, gave the name of Thornton to Prosper, Benoît, and Mr. Perrin, one after the other. Mr. Perrin asked,—

“Who is Thornton? An Italian?”

“No.”

“An Englishman?”

“Yes.”

“Is he your father, your brother; in short, any relation to you?”

“Thornton,” said Paolo, “is my friend.”

“And where is he to be found?” questioned Mr. Perrin.

Paolo tried very hard to recall where, but in vain.

However, the sleeping Psyche was at last awakened, and began to throw light on the past. Thread after thread of memory's involved skein was disentangling itself in Paolo's mind. Within a few days, he recollected every incident up to his arrival in Paris, but from that period down to the present moment, all was indistinct, like objects seen through a mist, pierced, however, by salient points, such as the shouting in the streets of persons in masquerade attire, Miss Jones in a ball dress, a huge building brilliantly lighted, and a violent cold that had made his teeth chatter. It was only by the recital given by those good Samaritans, his hosts, of the circumstances attending his entry under their hospitable roof, that he was able to fill up, by induction, the gaps in his memory. There was one among these, however, which defied his every effort, and that was the name of the street in which Thornton and he lodged, on their arrival in Paris. He had heard it so seldom, and that too at a time when his mind was beginning to be so strangely confused, that his having altogether forgotten it was nothing extraordinary ; and, as for identifying street or house from its appearance, no chance of that, considering that he had never seen either by daylight. Prosper

and his wife might have gone on to eternity repeating to him the titles of all the streets they could recollect, without ever hitting on the right one, but that the inventive genius of Benoît devised a method which won the day at last. He bought one of those cheap and popular Paris guides, in which not alone streets, squares, and places, are marked, but wherein you will find the narrowest passage, leading nowhere, accurately noted down. Once in the possession of this, Benoît read over every appellation from beginning to end. This scheme may appear obvious enough, but so was the way to make the egg stand upright, once hit upon by Columbus. As soon as the old bath-man pronounced the word Rohan, Paolo exclaimed that that was the street. Madame Prudence immediately set out with him, but alas! when they reached the spot, the Rue de Rohan no longer existed; all its buildings had been demolished a month previous. Then Paolo became, for the first time, aware that two full months had elapsed since the evening he had left Madame Françoise's house, never again to re-enter it. Yes, he could remember now that it must have been in the last week of March, and now it was the last week of May.

Paolo bore the disappointment with much more

equanimity than his companion, who protested that it seemed done on purpose to vex a saint—that it was frightful. Indeed, to be perfectly truthful, we ought to say that Paolo did not look at all disappointed. The revival of his mental faculties had not extended to this sensibility: his affections continued to slumber. He was abundantly indifferent to everything; and the very impressions, which he received from such parts of his recollections, as would have quickened his blood, and set him in a blaze two months ago, were now languid in the extreme — indeed, any thoughts he had about Lavinia or Thornton left his heart undisturbed.

Paolo's recovery of relative health of body and mind coincided, or thereabouts with the 24th of May, a date sacred in the annals of Prosper's family, and to commemorate which the little omnibus superintendent granted himself a holiday—the only one in the year—a holiday of six hours, from midday to six in the evening. On the 24th of May, 1845, Prosper and Prudence had lost their only girl, a child of four years old, and on all successive 24ths of May ever since, they had never failed to go and hang garlands of flowers, and wreaths of immortelles on the small iron cross, which marked the resting-place of little Annette in the

cemetery of Mont Parnasse. They resolved on the present anniversary to take Paolo with them, and make a great day of it. Accordingly, husband and wife, dressed in mourning, the children in brown blouses with leather belts, Paolo in his only suit of clothes, marvellously brushed for the occasion, with one of Prosper's caps to replace his lost hat; and last, not least, Benoît, dressed for once like any common mortal, started at noon in one of the Company's omnibuses, and were duly set down at the Barrière d'Enfer, from whence they proceeded on foot to the cemetery.

At one of the many shops furnishing funereal wares, which swarm in the neighbourhood of all the burying grounds of Paris, Mr. Prosper provided himself with as many wreaths as there were persons in his party, and distributed one to each, the children included; they then proceeded to little Annette's tomb, where each one laid their fragile emblems of a never-dying regret. Prudence threw herself on her knees, an example immediately followed by Prosper, Benoît and Paolo, and calling her boys to her side, bid them kneel also, and joining their hands, made them repeat a short prayer, in which they begged their little sister, now a bright angel in heaven, to intercede for them

with the blessed Virgin, so that they might grow up good, and a consolation to their parents, as she herself, the dear lost one, had been. Madame Prudence made no extravagant display of sensibility, but her brown face was rather whiter than usual, and her usual cheerful voice was low and broken. Prosper was very red when he got up, and he was a long time brushing the dust from the knees of his trousers, while Benoît was violently chewing a quid—quite an imaginary one—and looked pugnaciously ready for a thrust at some one, but he checked himself in time.

After this, they walked about the grounds for a couple of hours, comparing notes about this and that gorgeous monument, forming conjectures as to whether the little coffin just brought in was that of a girl or boy, expressing warm sympathy for the tall woman in black, who looked so careworn, and for the elderly gentleman in the shabby coat, praying so earnestly over a tomb; all this interspersed with remarks innumerable on the pleasantness of the spot. And certainly, if anything can make the abode of death pleasant, these neat, quiet verdant cemeteries of Paris must do so, with their trim alleys and walks, their rows of trees, and fresh groves, their profusion of flowers round the well pre-

served tombs, their concourse of visitors of all classes, at all times, with all the tokens, in short, of the great care of the living for the dead.

“Three o'clock—*en marche!*” commanded Benoît, after consulting his watch. A last farewell and a last prayer at the foot of little Annette's cross, and they took the road to the barrier, and into the wine shop opposite the omnibus stand, where they had a quiet dinner, composed of *purée aux croutons*, *fricandeau à l'oseille*, omelette, salad—accompanied by a bottle of wine with the yellow seal; which being disposed of, Benoît ordered a fresh bottle, while Prosper carefully undid a paper parcel and placed on the table what at first sight might have been mistaken for a huge nugget of silver. But the children knew what that shining coat meant, and saluted the “*cussy*” with screams of joy, that a lump of real silver would never have excited. The cake being cut in slices, and distributed, and the glasses filled, Benoît rose and gave the health of his young and esteemed friend, Mr. Paulot Maugchinié, which was drunk with hearty good wishes, attested by a merry clinking of the glasses one against the other. Paolo looked more pleased and excited than he had ever done since his recovery, especially when the two minor Prosper went up to

him, and putting their arms round his neck, kissed him.

And now, both Benoît's bottle and pipe being empty, and time short, they stepped into a departing omnibus—Benoît on the *impériale* for the enjoyment of a fresh pipe—and twenty minutes later, they alighted at the bureau ruled over by Mr. Prosper, as satisfied, if not more so, with their six hours' holiday, as many bigger and more consequential people with their six weeks' tour on the Continent, or stay at some fashionable town by the sea-side. Fortunately for the poor and busy, who have to work hard for their daily bread, the fewer their occasions for self-indulgence, the greater and keener the enjoyment they derive from them.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STERN SOBERER.

Mrs. JONES bore better than could have been expected the fatigue of her journey to London, where, however, her stay was but short; for the medical celebrities of the capital, immediately consulted, if differing *toto cælo* in the treatment they recommended, were unanimous in advising country air and tranquillity. Accordingly, aunt and niece, with part of the household, went to Mr. Jones's country seat, near Guildford, within an hour by rail from London.

The change was at first fraught with favourable results. Old sounds, old sights, old associations—all that combination of mysterious agencies and influences, which constitute home, attested their power, and revived the invalid; but the improvement lasted only as long as the novelty of the impressions, and the decline that followed seemed by contrast

more continuous and speedy. Poor Mrs. Jones saw, and felt herself die inch by inch. Stroke followed stroke in quick succession, and the palsy, hitherto confined to the left side, made its way slowly but surely to the right, like an enemy who carries subterranean approaches round a besieged citadel, previous to storming it. The little walk taken morning and evening was reduced to once a day, and had gradually to be curtailed, till it dwindled to nothing. The only way she could now enjoy the air, warmed by the April sun, and the sight and smell of spring flowers, was in a Bath chair; but even this had to be given up in course of time, and an hour or two spent on a sofa, drawn close to a window, became the only solace accessible to the dying woman—a solace which, alas! had to be renounced in its turn, for Mrs. Jones could no longer rise from her bed.

It was at this pass, that all the fond devotedness, which graced Lavinia's heart, revealed itself thoroughly. She lavished treasures of filial tenderness upon her aunt. Ah! if Paolo could have seen her now, looking more like an angel than a woman, as she kept watch over her sinking friend! From the beginning she had unwillingly allowed any one to share with her in the duties of a fond nurse and

attendant, yielding only when Nature despotically asserted a claim to repose. But as the dear one's time on earth visibly shortened, love conquered the body's weakness, and day and night there she was by the bedside, day and night devising new schemes to procure more ease for the patient—that relative ease which is but a diminution of pain—there she was insensible to fatigue, inexhaustible in words of encouragement, of hope, of endearment. Was Lavinia not richly repaid by the calm she imparted, by the smiles she elicited, by the blessings bestowed on her? More than a hundredfold did she receive back in return for her every loving-kindness. She did not, perhaps, recognize at the time the great blessing that fell on herself, while ministering to Mrs. Jones's spiritual comfort; but surely portions of holy writ, the eternal truths of Scripture, recited and thought over by the lamp of a sick room, under the very shadow of death, seldom fail to assume a new and living significance in the mind of the reader, and to mould themselves into practical precepts of life.

At intervals Mrs. Jones referred anxiously to Signor Mancini, wondering why he had not joined them in England. Lavinia, poor girl, needed no reminder about Paolo; a thought of him mingled

with her most painful pre-occupations. Gentle and loving as he was, how he would have sympathized with her, had he known of her affliction. Not one of his words, which had ever borne the least reference to her present sad trial, but she recollected as vividly as though spoken only the day before. How truly had he said, that neither youth, nor fortune, nor health, had ever proved an impenetrable shield against the shafts of sorrow, which, through the breast of some dear object, found a sure passage to the most fortunate of mankind. How many times, under how many shapes, had he not tried to impress on her, that affections were the salt of life, the only reality worth pursuing here below.

The truth of his words struck home to her now. But for the love she felt, but for the love she inspired, what would have been in this hour of extremity her poor aunt's fate? The answer was ready: rich in money, surrounded by luxury, as she was, Mrs. Jones would have been left, in these her last days, to the mercenary care of hirelings. For, as to Mr. Jones, he had never once omitted going daily to town, had never returned an hour earlier to his dinner, had never shortened by five minutes the time dedicated to his wine, nor once refrained from finishing the day by a comfortable evening's

nap in the easy-chair by his wife's bedside. When he spoke, if he spoke at all, it was on topics strangely at variance with the atmosphere of the room; in general, however, he confined himself to a good-night, accompanied by one or other of those would-be consolatory banalities, which, in Mrs. Jones's all but hopeless state, meant less than nothing. The servants on their side made up for the official look of condolence, which they thought becoming to wear in their master's presence, by making twice as merry when out of sight.

As the sufferer's strength decreased, so did the lucidity of her mind increase. One evening, after she had lain in a lethargic state throughout the whole day, Mrs. Jones seemingly awoke, and, calling to Lavinia, bade her come close to her, that she might not lose a word of what she was about to impart. A burden had long pressed heavily on her conscience, said Mrs. Jones—a burden she must throw off, otherwise she could not die easily. Then, with a clearness never once at fault, she went on to make to the astonished girl the following disclosure.

When, now more than thirteen years ago, Mr. Jones had been prevailed on by his wife to adopt and take charge of the only daughter of his eldest brother,

Mr. Jones had done so on the express condition, that the existence of the little Lavinia's parents, and the early circumstances of the family into which she was about to enter, should both be kept a secret from her. Mr. Jones, rich and a man of growing importance, was already ashamed of his former calling, and, wishing to have what he styled a real gentlewoman in his niece, believed he was taking the best means to secure her becoming one, by trampling under foot one of God's commandments. Mrs. Jones, out of fondness for the child on whom she doted, accepted the bargain, and Lavinia accordingly grew up in the belief, confirmed by the silence of her uncle and aunt, that she was an orphan. Her father, on his side, who had renounced all intercourse with his daughter (Mrs. Jones believed for a certain sum of money), kept faithfully out of the way. For the tacit deception she had practised, partly out of fear of her husband's wrath, though still more so out of apprehension as to the consequences, which any divulging of the truth might bring to a niece she adored, repentant Mrs. Jones now humbly asked and easily obtained forgiveness.

It is easy to imagine that Lavinia, not only startled, but deeply affected by this revelation, was anxious to hear something more of her unknown

parents. Mrs. Jones had never known Lavinia's mother, who had died shortly after giving over the child to her relations; and of her father she had seen very little. The first time was shortly after her marriage to Mr. Mark Jones; he was then a man perhaps of six or seven and thirty, but looking much older, and very careworn. She knew he had been a bankrupt more than once; but the brothers not being on good terms, she met him but rarely: and from the moment she and her husband had taken charge of Lavinia, all sort of communication had utterly ceased between her and her brother-in-law; even his abode had been carefully concealed from her. She had, however, discovered, through the loquacity of the servants, that he came by stealth now and then to see her husband. After these visits Mr. Jones had always been out of sorts, complaining of his brother, and calling him a drunkard. As to the poor man's being dead or alive, Mrs. Jones had not the slightest clue to guide her; the last time she had seen him was in the street, just before they went abroad, and he appeared sadly broken down. She would have spoken to him, but for being with her husband. This was all the information Lavinia could gain about her parents.

The aunt completed her confession by making

known to her niece her own and her husband's humble origin and beginning in life. She reproached herself the more with having concealed these circumstances, as she now saw that Lavinia might have found, in the knowledge of them, a counterpoise and a corrective to the ideas and aspirations, imbibed from a training far above her station, and fostered by the self-conceit, the preposterous notions, and example of Mr. Jones. His chase after gentility had been the bane of their life. Regarded with feelings of resentment, or ridicule, by the class he had deserted; despised by his superiors, whose notice he courted; haunted by a perpetual fear of meeting some one acquainted with a past he would fain have forgotten himself, Mr. Jones, ever since he had been bitten by the gad-fly of pride, had made himself one of the most disturbed of mortals. Lavinia had surely not forgotten their precipitate and mysterious flight from Florence in the heat of August. Well, that was entirely induced by Mr. Jones having come across an old patron; in fact, one of his first customers, my Lord Berriton.

As to herself, sighed Mrs. Jones, her health and spirits had declined from the very commencement of this mad straining after an unattainable fashion, from the moment when she had had to

resign a wholesome sphere of activity and usefulness for one of inert luxury, in which she felt not only displaced, but every taste, duty, and habit of which jarred with all her former tastes, duties, and habits. Thence it was that she had, somewhat hastily she allowed, encouraged her niece's growing partiality for Signor Paolo; being satisfied by what she had seen of the world, that a union entered upon, even with scanty means, but based on mutual affection and esteem, and some moderation of desires, had more chances of happiness than one of those dashing matches between two spoilt children of fortune, which leaves nothing to wish for but the condiment of love; the couple concerned being too much in love with themselves, to have any left to bestow on each other.

These were the last confidences that Miss Jones received from her aunt. Before another day reached its close, the lips that had made them were sealed for ever here below, and she who had listened to them lay on a sick couch, shattered in body and mind. But the wholesome seed of more than one kind, which had fallen on heart and soul during this painful probation, was not likely to be lost; and we may confidently expect that once the first shock be over, Lavinia will rise from the trial quite a

renovated being, strengthened for all good purposes. Sorrow is the *toga virilis* of the soul. He or she, who has never seen face to face that stern soberer, Death, knows but little of life and its aims.

CHAPTER XIV.

COUNTER-SEARCH.

A MIGHTY consultation was being held in the back parlour of Mr. Prosper's establishment, under circumstances promising little for the quick settlement of the point in question, inasmuch as, out of the four plenipotentiaries assembled in conference, two, Benoît and Prosper, were constantly bounding in and out of the room, and thus causing perpetual delay to the proceedings.

If there were ever two galley-slaves by trade, the two were Benoît and Prosper, and if one of the two was a greater galley-slave than the other, that one was Prosper. For people do not douche nor steam themselves for ever; and therefore Benoît might have moments of respite, could even remember having sat down to his dinner, and finished it without interruption; whereas such a luxury was unknown to Prosper. His labours knew of no solution

of continuity. People do loco-move for ever. There was an uncouth machine stopping before Prosper's dwelling every five minutes, and there was Prosper every five minutes seeing passengers out of it, and passengers into it, comparing notes, settling with the conductor, and ~~whistling to~~ the huge conveyance to move off; more to do yet—back to his bureau to serve out new correspondence tickets, and numbers of precedence, besides affording information to all who ask for it. Five minutes were soon used up at this rate, and again a warning whistle carried him to the street to begin the foregoing performance anew; and so on and on from seven in the morning to twelve at night. And thus Prosper being whistled away every five minutes, and Benoît telegraphed to from his den in the courtyard, let us say on an average every seven minutes, one or both were always missing, and the deliberation flagged.

The question just now under consideration had been mooted by Paolo, and seconded by Madame Prudence, and was this: Should Paolo go to the police to make inquiries after Thornton? The initiative taken by the young Roman betokened a new phase in his psychological condition. Paolo's feelings were at last roused, and friendship at once asserted

its rights. To find his benefactor, to reassure and be reassured, were the paramount desires of his heart. Even had he been without those strong cords of an almost filial affection which bound him to the Englishman, other considerations would have impelled him to the search. With Thornton he should find the means of discharging that part of his debt to his kind hosts which money could repay, and of getting back to Rome. Paolo had left money enough in his lodgings in the Rue de Rohan, to meet both exigencies, and naturally Mortimer would have seen to the safety of his property. Paolo was eager to leave Paris—a sort of nostalgia had seized upon him.

Having decided with himself that the most probable clue to Thornton's whereabouts was to be obtained from the Joneses, he had made up his mind to the effort of calling there. The recollection of Lavinia was linked with many painful, though still confused associations, so that he knew not whether he should like to see her again or not. He had gone to the Boulevard des Capucines, but only to be thrust into deeper darkness. The Joneses had been gone more than two months, and the tall English gentleman who had been latterly in the habit of calling on them had never shown his face there since their departure. Paolo had then bethought

himself of the police, and some questions having revealed his intention of going to that office, the present consultation had been the result.

Madame Prudence was of opinion that he ought to go, and might do so with safety, provided she were with him. Prosper was for referring the matter to Mr. Perrin, and abiding by the doctor's advice, but was prevented from developing his thesis by the whistle, which summoned him out of doors. Benoît combated any notion of the kind with might and main.

"Go to the police!" remonstrated the ex-sergeant, getting down from the window-sill, in which he had been seated, with a jerk that sent both his slippers across the room in opposite directions. "Throw himself into the wolf's jaws, you mean; and once in, who is to get him out, *quoi?*"

"I have committed no offence," said Paolo, quietly; "why should I be in danger with the police?"

"Let them alone; they'll find plenty of reasons for putting you out of sight. Take it as a rule, a refugee is always giving offence to somebody."

"But I am not a refugee," said Paolo.

"Not a refugee!" repeated Benoît, standing aghast.

"Not a refugee!" repeated Madame Prudence

and Prosper, who was making one of his hundreds of entrances.

"No more than you are," persisted Paolo.

"An Italian and not a refugee!" said Benoît, scraping his bald pate; "it's out of nature;" and by way of reconciling himself to the absurdity, he made a thrust or two at the wall. "Are you sure that you are not a ref—— D—— the boy with his signals. *On y va*. I think all Paris wants to be vapoured to-day—*quoi!*" and away the old fellow shuffled.

"If you are not a refug——" Prosper began, but he had just time to add—"d— the whistle," and he bolted away.

Paolo and Madame Prudence, thus left alone, did what, under the circumstances, was the only reasonable thing to do—namely, put on, he his somewhat greasy casquette, she, her faded bonnet, and went out at once. Prosper, whom they met on the threshold of the office, patiently listening to a complaint lodged by a very fat lady against the conductor, who had not stopped immediately on her signing to him so to do—Prosper, we say, faintly attempted to dissuade his wife from taking a step he was morally sure would be displeasing to his godfather.

Madame Prudence, who harboured some seeds of jealousy as to the great ascendancy exercised by Benoît over her husband, retorted that his godfather was at full liberty to be pleased or displeased, but that she and Signor Paolo were neither of them children, nor yet, thank God, in any need of leading-strings, upon hearing which Prosper wisely let things take their course. Truth to say, the omnibus official's belief in Benoît's infallibility had received a severe check ever since the latter had peremptorily pronounced Paolo's case to be one of cholera, and had been proved to be grossly in error. And now the morning's discovery that Paolo was not a refugee, when Benoît had declared the impossibility of his being aught else, could not be overlooked by even so dutiful a godson as Prosper. Benoît's prestige was fading away fast, like many another reputation based on infallibility.

Through the same dingy passages and vaults, along the identical mouldy yards and lurid squares, which had frowned a few months ago on Mortimer and Madame Françoise in search of Paolo, now Paolo and Madame Prudence toiled in search of Thornton. The prefecture was to Prudence a *terra incognita*. In fact, she had never been there, and knew no more about the different offices, their names

and attributions, than about Troy or Tyre. The best course, in her holy state of ignorance, seemed, and was, to apply to a sergent de ville—there were many about—and ask for direction; but the moment she tried to shape her question, she found it far from easy, considering that in order to ask one's way somewhere, one must know, or thereabouts, the name at least of one's place of destination. Nothing remained in this dilemma, but to put the police agent on the scent of what she wanted, by briefly stating her case, which she did. It was a case for the *Bureau des Renseignements*, said the man, and he forthwith took her to the foot of the staircase, which led to the office of information on the first floor.

A great stillness prevailed in the room, into which, after a discreet knock at the door, and an answer from within to "come in," our visitors ventured with a beating heart. Two gentlemen were busy writing at a desk, and to the one of them who raised his head in mute interrogation, Prudence explained her errand.

"Was she, or was the gentleman in her company, related to the person they inquired for?" asked the official.

"Neither were related to the gentleman they

sought after," replied Prudence; "but her companion was a great friend of Mr. Thornton."

"Had they a written order from the prefect of police, authorizing the inquiry?" asked the official again.

They had nothing of the sort. Well, then, let them procure one, and come again with it. It was indispensable.

As our discomfited couple issued on to the little piazza facing the office, they met at the very spot where they had left him, the identical policeman who had directed them, and who now asked of the lady, if she had found her man.

"Alas! not," said Prudence; "we must have an order from the préfet."

"I thought so," said the man, walking along a little way with them. "You needn't apply in person, you know—the préfet wouldn't receive you. Send in your request in writing."

Prudence thanked him for the information. They were standing now in front of the *Bureau des Passeports*.

"Did not you say, that your friend that's missing was an American?" asked the policeman.

"An Englishman," rectified Prudence.

"Ah! yes—a foreigner at all events. Suppose

he had set off? Had you not better see at the *Bureau des Passeports?* ”

The hint was sensible, and appeared good to follow, so, with many thanks to the prompter, Paolo and Prudence walked in.

The passport office was to the office of information what a surging sea is to a stagnant pool. In the month of June, Paris, like London, begins to move out of town, and consequently great was the concourse of applicants, and lightning quick went the employés' pens and tongues, taking down descriptions of, and cross-examining, we were going to say, the accused; for there is something suggestive of a criminal court, and a witness-box, in the calling up of persons, and then subjecting them to interrogations, the answers to which are written down. As the half-bewildered Prudence, with a rueful face, was contemplating a gap in the thick human wall standing between her and the official's desk, the municipal guard on duty stationed in front of the rails, noticing her distress, bade her come forward, and, gallantly making way for her, observed to a tall by-stander, who grumbled about being beforehand, that the fair sex always took precedence in France. Thanks to this seasonable succour, she was enabled to make known her request to the

nearest employé, who directed her to another part of the room, where there were more desks and more men at them.

The one to whom she addressed herself proved of a very humane disposition, and showed an interest in her and her companion. Maybe he had a mother or sister, not better off in the world than poor scantily dressed Prudence, or perhaps he had once had a brother looking as emaciated and careworn as Paolo. Sympathy, however, is to be gratefully accepted without prying into its origin, and gratefully it was received in this case, when the kindly disposed individual, depositing his pen behind his ear, took himself out of the room with a scrap of writing containing the name and last address of the person inquired after, and presently came with the little consoling intelligence, that "*Sir*" Mortimer Thornton had had his passport *viséd* for the United States on the 16th of May.

"He is gone to look after me, I am sure," said Paolo, as he walked away slowly and with tears starting into his eyes.

"Well, when he does not find you there, he'll come back, and seek you out here," replied Prudence with a show of confidence and cheerfulness which did not go farther than the surface. They reached

home before Prosper's state of distraction had entirely disorganized the service of his line of omnibuses; for the little man had been so frightened out of his wits by the visions of dungeons, bagnios, and scaffolds, which friendly Benoît had evoked for this comfort, that for the last quarter of an hour he had been sending the passengers for the Jardin des Plantes to the Pantheon, and *vice versâ*, heaping blunder upon blunder.

Prudence slept little that night, and thought much, and the upshot of her reflections was, that it would be worth while to apply to the English Embassy; "for," reasoned Prudence, "Mr. Forton" (such being her pronupciation of Thornton's name), "Mr. Forton has been gone now, if he went at all, for nine-and-twenty whole days, and even I know that nine-and-twenty days is time enough for going, staying, and returning from New York. He may then be back already, and if he is, ten to one but they know it at his embassy."

Madame Prudence told this to Paolo next day, as the fruits of a counsel held with her pillow, and, unlike most counsels, it was favourably received by all, and eagerly grasped at by the young man; and with renewed hope Prosper's wife and her *protégé* started on this new expedition after Thornton.

As directed by the concierge of the British Embassy, they turned into the consulate office, where the simple statement of their wish to know whether an English gentleman of the name of Thornton was actually in Paris, drew forth a volley of questions as to who they themselves were—if they had any pecuniary claim against this Englishman, or were related to him—and what had put it into their heads to come to the English consulate. These queries answered, and the nature of the interest prompting the inquiry clearly and fully explained, then, and not till then, the secretary or clerk, by whom they were received, informed them that Mr. Mortimer Thornton had solicitors in London, whose address he would write down for them, if they wished it. Meagre as was the proffered service, it was accepted with thanks, and Mr. Secretary accordingly presented them with a bit of paper, on which was written, “Messrs. Henstrid and Co., 14, Golden Square, London,” whereupon the two applicants walked out very little wiser than they had walked in—Prudence, with feminine perspicuity, suspecting the consul’s clerk of knowing more about Thornton than he chose to say, a suspicion which, however, with feminine kindness, she forbore to impart to poor Paolo.

Paolo despatched without delay a letter to Messrs. Henstrid and Co. in London, and one to Mortimer Thornton, addressed to Via Babuino, in case his friend should have returned to Rome. He also wrote a few lines to Angelo Gigli—that being the real name of our funny little friend, Salvator Rosa—to recollect which cost Paolo not a little thinking. This last epistle, sybilline enough, simply stated that Thornton had disappeared, but without the least reference to any of the attendant circumstances, asking, should any clue to him happen to reach Salvator, that the intelligence might be immediately sent to the writer in Paris, care of Mr. Prosper, Quai Montebello, 77.

To his illness or to his money difficulties, Paolo made no allusion whatever. Why should he give the good little painter the pain of knowing his friend to be in distress, when he had no power to help? For well did Paolo know that not all the money Salvator and his other companions could scrape together, would be half sufficient to take him from Paris to Rome.

We may as well mark here that Paolo, on quitting Rome, had, in the anticipation of a long absence, taken with him all the money he possessed in the world, and that the French bank post bill represent-

ing this sum, had been left with Thornton; also that the half-dozen pieces of gold he had had about him when he set off on the unlucky expedition to the Hotel de Ville, had also gone, purse and all, comprising the scrap of paper with the address of the Rue de Rohan, probably dropped while he was either scuffling with or trying to bribe the guards to let him in as one of the ball guests.

In due course of post Messrs. Henstrid and Co., with business-like alacrity, acknowledged Paolo's letter: they regretted not being able for the present to furnish Mr. Mancini with the address of their esteemed client, M. Thornton, Esq., whose absence abroad they had every reason to suppose would last a considerable time.

This letter, however unsatisfactory, had in it a drop of consolation for Paolo. It assured him that, wherever Thornton might be, he was safe and uninjured.

Messrs. Henstrid's letter was quickly followed by one from Salvator, to say that Thornton had not been seen in Rome since he had left the city with Paolo. Salvator's letter, naturally enough, teemed with questions and conjectures about the mystery of Thornton's disappearance, and asked to be told what were Paolo's plans for the future. Paolo wrote

back that he had no other plan than to be back in Rome as soon as possible, and would delay all explanations about Thornton and himself until he could give them *vivâ voce*. Paolo had two motives for this postponement of confidence—one, his unwillingness to make known his present embarrassments to his friend, which he could not avoid if he entered into any details of what had occurred; the other, his repugnance to accuse Lavinia, which it would be difficult not to do, if a real statement of the case was to be given.

CHAPTER XV.

HIMSELF AGAIN.

MESSRS. HENSTRID AND Co.'s concise and well-written letter had extinguished Paolo's last hope of reaching Thornton for the present, even through the medium of the post, but had in no way diminished the young man's confidence, that wherever that good friend was, he was in search of him. In the meantime he must depend on himself, that is, he must work not only for his daily bread, but to gain wherewithal to make his way back to Rome.

Paolo did not disguise from himself that it was easier to wish for work than to procure it; more peculiarly so for one in his own situation—a stranger in a foreign land, imperfectly acquainted with French, with no possession but a threadbare suit, a solitary change of linen, and the good-will of three kind-hearted creatures, poor as rats, and without a right to claim kindred with any other human

beings. But when necessity gives us a gripe of her iron claw, it is said that she communicates to us invention. Paolo consulted his confidant, Prudence, or rather reposed his confidence in her motherly heart. A good woman, whatever her station, is the earthly providence of the men about her. Prudence shrank a little from the idea of the delicate-looking invalid working for his daily bread; he must get stronger first, indeed he must.

"I am strong enough," said Paolo, "and I cannot afford to go on idling. I have been already too long a burden to you—I hate to think how long; but I have not been myself till to-day."

Prudence scorned the notion of his having been a burden to them. The little they had been able to do was more than repaid by his having put up so willingly with their poor accommodation, so far below his station and habits.

"Pray," said Paolo, trying to smile, "don't seek to diminish the benefits you have conferred, by fancying me some prince in disguise. I wish I may never have worse accommodation than what you are pleased to disparage. I have not been brought up in lavender, I assure you. At seventeen I was left naked as a worm, with no other capital than my two hands. Had I twenty lives to spend in

your service, I should still never be quits with you—never.”

If it be true, as it certainly is, that we must do good for its own sake, and not for any thanks it may bring us, it is not the less true, that a warm acknowledgment of what we meant as kindness, is, next to the testimony of our own conscience, the very sweetest reward we can receive. The grateful enthusiasm of the young Roman went to her heart the more, that Prudence was less accustomed to anything like demonstrativeness on his part. Only now had his benumbed feelings suddenly awoke to life, showing him, in their full extent, the obligations he was under to his kind hosts. Paolo had spoken the literal truth when he had said, that till this day he had not been himself.

“Well, then,” said Prudence, briskly, “we’ll do our best to find you work; and—*à la garde de Dieu*—is there any one thing you can do better than another?”

“I can draw and I can paint,” returned Paolo. “I was brought up as a painter.”

“Painting and drawing are rather out of my way,” and the Frenchwoman, with her forefinger on her lips, fell to musing. “Playing on the piano and singing would have been better; there’s the

daughter of the porter next door, she wants a singing-master, I know."

"I can teach Italian, or copy papers," said Paolo. "I don't care what it is; I am ready to be a street porter and carry loads, if I can get nothing else to do."

"We shan't come to that, I hope," said Prudence; "but you must give me time to think."

Prosper, when he was apprised of Paolo's wants and wishes, racked his brain, but found nothing there except omnibuses, and what belonged to omnibuses; and he was keen for applying to his company for a vacant place of conductor for his *protégé*. Benoît got frightfully excited at the thought that here was Signor Paolo, actually a painter, and a painter in want of work, and not a fortnight ago all the baths of his establishment had received a fresh coat of green. More practical Prudence passed all her neighbours in a mental muster; the review did not take long, and the result was, that "if Mr. Perrin did not help him out of this trouble, why he'd have to stick in it."

Mr. Perrin accordingly received a visit from Madame Prudence, and the dilemma was made known to him with a circumlocution and diplomacy, that would have been creditable in quarters to which

Prudence and Co. looked up with the awe due to principalities and archangels. Mr. Perrin, having, with glasses on his nose, succeeded in penetrating into the subject on which he was being consulted, now took off his spectacles, twirling them between his thumb and first finger—the ordinary sign with him of contention of mind.

“He is a painter, is he? a noble calling, no doubt; but for practical purposes I had rather he had been a musician. But all these Italians can sing and play, can’t they?”

“Just what I said to him,” sighed Prudence; “but it’s just another of his misfortunes that he can’t do either the one or the other; and I see no help for it.”

“None, indeed, that way,” said the doctor; “we must think of something else—we must think; when I have thought, I’ll call and tell you. Adieu.”

By the time Prudence got home, a placard, written in Prosper’s best hand, was already on the window shutters of the office, announcing to all passers-by, that drawing lessons by a first-rate master were to be had on moderate terms; for the terms and address to apply within. From that day, Mr. Prosper, whenever his avocations called him momentarily out of his premises, and that was pretty often, we know,

never failed, before recrossing the threshold, to stop and read his own placard with the utmost attention, giving himself all the while, to the best of his ability, the air of an amateur meditating upon the benefit to be derived from the union of a first-rate and cheap master.

Poor Prosper! his kindly artifice had no effect. Luckily, however, after two days of heart-sickness, Mr. Perrin appeared in the waiting-room of the establishment, his spectacles particularly bright and clear; he came to leave the address of a gentleman, on whom he requested Mr. Paolo Mancini to call next day at eleven in the morning. The gentleman in question was a savant of much renown, named Pertuis, one who had brought to bear upon Rome and the Romans of yore a prodigious amount of knowledge and of critical acumen, and the patience of a Benedictine monk. In all likelihood, Mr. Pertuis knew more about both subjects than most of their own contemporaries.

Mr. Pertuis occupied an old and rather quaint-looking house in the Place Royale, a quiet nook in busy, worldly Paris; and Paolo, while traversing a suite of lofty rooms on his way to the study of the man of learning, had his eyes and heart truly gladdened by the sight of many a dear, and once to him familiar,

object. On the walls were finely engraved views of Rome, some good copies from Raphael—on pedestals, casts from *chef-d'œuvres* of sculpture. Paolo found Mr. Pertuis busy comparing different authors, with a view to establishing a contested date, and the wide writing-table before him having proved incapable of accommodating the number of open volumes of all sizes, to which he wanted to refer, the savant had ranged on either side of the arm-chair he occupied two lesser tables, also overloaded with books. It was in this state of circumvallation that Mr. Pertuis was surprised by Paolo, who, according to orders, had been ushered in without any previous announcement. The archæologist, therefore, in order to get out of his entrenchment without endangering the equilibrium of his tables, and the rank and file of his books, a work of trouble and time, had no other alternative but to push his chair backwards out of risk of upsetting his allies, and to meet his visitor by a flank movement, which he dexterously accomplished, laughing heartily, and apologizing at the same time.

This trifling incident saved Paolo much of the awkwardnessⁿ that invariably attends a first visit, particularly when the visitor is very shy, and comes to ask a favour. Mr. Pertuis's cordial reception

and amenity of manners, without mentioning his fluent Italian, soon put Paolo at his ease. Rome and Art were the exclusive topics of the conversation, and Paolo spoke of both like the warm-hearted patriot and devoted artist he was. If Mr. Pertuis, as was more than probable, aimed at drawing out his companion, his wish must have been fully gratified. After the lapse of a good half-hour, Paolo felt it incumbent on him to rise; shaking hands, Mr. Pertuis begged the favour of another call in a few days, when he hoped to have found some opening for him. This was all the allusion made to the circumstances, which had been the motive of the young man's introduction to the savant.

After a week, Paolo considered he might venture again to seek an interview with his patron of the Place Royale. Mr. Pertuis received him cordially, and handed to him the address of a Mr. Boniface.

"An excellent friend of mine," added Mr. Pertuis; "and an astronomer of much repute. I fear the occupation he may have to offer you may not be very acceptable, as it has nothing whatever in common with your profession. Nevertheless, I would not advise you to refuse it, for you remember the old saying—a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

Paolo eagerly assented, and lost no time in seeking

out Mr. Boniface. This gentleman was a retired employé of the observatory, who, by dint of having been perpetually on the look-out for new planets, and new or old comets, had nearly lost his eyesight. He was now using his forced leisure in arranging his former notes and observations, and preparing them for publication; but, as he was unable either to read or write for any length of time at a stretch, he wanted a secretary who could do both for him, and had for some time been in quest of one, without ever having been able to decide on any of those who had offered to take the situation. For Mr. Boniface, simple and naïf as a child in all other respects, in what concerned his MS., distrusted the entire bulk of mankind, being convinced there was a general permanent conspiracy on foot to rob him of his theory on the formation of comets, and of the glory that must accrue from it. A foreigner and a stranger to science, such as Mr. Pertuis had guaranteed the person he recommended to be, was, under the circumstances, a god-send to the old astronomer.

“Sir,” began Mr. Boniface, a tall bony man past sixty, rather bent, and with a green silk shade over his eyes—“sir, I must warn you at once that I am very fidgety in my ways.”

Paolo thought it polite to make a deprecatory gesture.

"Indeed, I am," continued Mr. Boniface; "my sister here present will tell you that I am so, and not easily to be satisfied—and—an early riser to boot. Marie, my dear, if I forget anything else I ought to say, be so good as to remind me. Well, then, if what I have confessed does not serve to deter you, sir, well, then, I shall be glad if you agree to come, and we will begin work to-morrow." Here Mr. Boniface stopped and gazed vacantly at the space before him.

"About the hours," whispered sister Marie, into his ear.

"Ah, yes—about the hours," resumed Mr. Boniface; "thank you, Marie, my dear. I had forgotten about the hours. If you can be here by eight in the morning, sir, at eight precisely, you will oblige me greatly."

Paolo bowed assent.

"Very well, at eight in the morning; then it's all settled;" and all being settled, Mr. Boniface gave a nod, and relapsed into what seemed a trance.

"My brother's hours," said Mdlle. Marie, now taking the conversation into her own hands, "are from eight in the morning to mid-day, and again

from one o'clock to six in the evening. Will they suit you?"

"Perfectly, madam," said Paolo.

"Now for the terms," cried the sister again, into her brother's ears.

"Ah, yes—for the terms," repeated Mr. Boniface, awakening; "very kind of you to remind me of the terms—I had forgotten all about them. Well, then, we say from eight in the morning till noon; will that do?"

"It is not that," interrupted the sister, "it is not that."

"How not that?" said the brother; "I am sure I thought it was from eight till twelve."

"Bless me—yes, brother; but we are speaking about money now, not hours. Shall I arrange it for you, my dear?"

"Precisely, precisely," reiterated Mr. Boniface, suddenly relieved.

"My brother, sir," said Mdlle. Marie, turning to Paolo, "offers four francs a day, or, to be more exact, sixty francs a fortnight, always payable in advance; each party remaining free at the expiration of the fifteen days to break or renew the agreement. This clause," added the lady, remarking the disagreeable effect it had upon the young man, "means

nothing further than that my brother is, or fancies himself, over particular, and consequently is unwilling to bind you for a longer period than a fortnight to duties which might prove unpalatable to you."

Paolo stammered forth a few words, expressive of confidence in his employer's indulgence, said that he hoped to make up by zeal for his want of knowledge, and withdrew, not at all enlightened, and considerably alarmed as to the nature of the employment he had undertaken; which, however, proved on the morrow, as far as one day's experience might be trusted, far less trying than he had anticipated. His hours were thus divided: from eight o'clock to twelve, he had to put in chronological order a good many notes, and then reading them aloud, to retrench or add to them under Mr. Boniface's direction and dictation; from one to six in the evening, to make a fair copy of the morning's work.

As a neighbouring clock struck six, Mdlle. Boniface appeared to announce to her brother that dinner was on the table, and to Paolo that his task for the day was over. Paolo took his leave, and was already in the passage, when he was overtaken by Mademoiselle, who put a small packet in his hand, explaining that it was the fortnight's salary, as stipu-

lated. The young man reddened, as if he had been caught in the act of stealing the famous theory, and hurried away without a word of thanks.

The first thing he did, even before allowing himself the meal, of which he stood in great need, was to go and hire a furnished room in the garret of a house in the Rue du Four, a street close to Rue Cassette, where Mr. Boniface lived; the second, to buy some toys for the children, and then for himself a hat, to replace Prosper's old greasy cap. This done, he entered a third or fourth rate restaurant, and indulged in what had become a luxury to him, viz. a *bouillon*, a beefsteak *aux pommes-de-terre*, and bread *à discrétion*—all enjoyed for the modest sum of fifteen sous, one sou for the waiter included.

Great was the impatience with which Mr. Prosper's household waited to know how Mr. Paolo had passed his day, and great was the excitement produced by his account, and the presentation of the sword and gun for the little ones; but there was almost a tumult when he announced that he had taken a lodging, and meant to go and sleep there that night. Benoît especially was so overcome by his feelings, and by something else to boot, that in an attempt to vent them on the wall, he lost his balance, and would have fallen flat on the ground, but for the

“boy’s” catching him in his arms—an embrace from which Paolo could not extricate himself short of many solemn vows never to forget his “vieux.”

By ten o’clock that night Paolo was established in his attic, busy with his accounts. Eight francs paid in advance for a fortnight’s rent of his room, five francs for his hat, fifteen sous for the toys, ditto for his dinner, made up a sum of fourteen francs fifty centimes, an enormous amount for one day, which, deducted from the sixty he had received, left a balance of five-and-forty francs, and fifty centimes. Paolo reckoned that, by exercising the strictest economy, with the proviso that Mr. Boniface continued satisfied with him, he might be able to realize within two months wherewithal to defray his journey back to Rome. Two months seemed long in prospect, but they would pass as so many others had passed, and with this consolatory reflection he jumped into his bed, which gave a succession of cracks, like the bursting of a rocket. A rap on the thin partition wall immediately followed. Paolo rapped back, and a voice so near that it seemed to be in the room, said,—

“*Bonne nuit, voisin.*”

“*Bonne nuit, voisin,*” returned Paolo; and then all relapsed into silence.

“A neighbour of a kind disposition,” thought Paolo. “I’d bet any wager that he is just such another poor devil as I am. Poverty is a good conductor of kindliness. Were this a palace, and my neighbour and I millionnaires—save us, ye gods—what introductions, and notes, and cards it would need to bring us together.”

Paolo could think no further, for he fell asleep. We will leave him in this satisfactory condition, and take a trip across the Chamel to see after the fortunes of one, whose claims on our sympathy are scarcely, if at all, inferior to those of our Morpheus-stricken friend.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ALTERNATIVE.

Nothing could prevail on Miss Lavinia to leave the house in which her aunt had died. The very reasons urged by Mr. Jones against her remaining there, its sad associations and utter solitude, for the surrounding villas were emptying apace for the London season, only served to endear Holly Lodge to her. What Lavinia wished above all things, was to be let alone. Hers was not one of those griefs, which seek to be diverted, or evaporate in visits of condolence and idle demonstrations. Mr. Jones did not insist. There was that about Lavinia—a something new and imposing, the majesty of sorrow—which enforced acquiescence. In all the bloom of health and spirits, in all the splendour of her gay attire of yore, she had never impressed him as being half so commanding and queen-like, as she did now

in her plain mourning dress, with her pale face and dejected looks.

Nor was she sorry to be separated from Mr. Jones at this period. Her uncle had gained nothing in her eyes of late. The deceit he had practised on her, and imposed on his wife, the perfect indifference and unfeelingness he had displayed throughout the whole of Mrs. Jones's illness, were little calculated to increase the esteem or affection of his niece for him. Nor had she forgotten a confidence made to her in a moment of anguish, at Rome, viz. that Mrs. Jones had married without a settlement, and that consequently all she possessed had become Mr. Jones's property. Arguing upon the strength of her recent impressions, Lavinia came to the conclusion that Mr. Jones's sole aim in marrying the widow Jarman, had been to get hold of her money, and that he had done so by taking advantage of her simplicity and good faith. The prospect, therefore, of residing with, and indeed of being entirely dependent on, a man so unscrupulous and selfish, alarmed her moral sense and revolted her honest pride. Had she but been wiser, she would not have lacked a firm friend and protector in this crisis. Much did she now dwell on Paolo and on his love for her, and oh! how she wished from the depths of her soul that she could

recall the past. Vain longings! vainer regrets! she had wilfully thrown away, past hope of recovery, that which would have been a strong stay alike in happiness or sorrow. She was alone in the world—no, not alone—she had a father.

And then she resolved on having an explanation with her uncle about this unknown father of hers, and anxiously waited for an opportunity. This, however, did not occur for some little time. Mr. Jones wrote frequently to her would-be kind and consolatory notes, asking after her health, and whether she wanted for anything, but he stayed away a whole fortnight. When he at last made his appearance, it so happened that Lavinia was too unwell to venture upon a topic so trying to her feelings, and she was fain to put off her inquiries until a more favourable moment.

The next Sunday morning brought Mr. Jones again to the Lodge, and this time Lavinia at once told him she was glad to see him, as she wanted to know all that he could tell her of her father. Mr. Jones grew black in the face, which was his way of blushing, and with an oath,—

“So the old woman peached, did she; never mind, it is all the better that she broke the ice for me. I had made up my mind to tell you all, but

you must curb your impatience. You will require, I know, tangible proofs of what I have to say, and you shall have them on my next visit."

Not another syllable on this subject could Lavinia draw from him.

The day of the longed-for explanation at length arrived; it was on the Sunday following that on which Lavinia had asked for it. Mr. Jones's statement was full, minute, consistent in all its parts, leaving nothing to desire in point of clearness of evidence. We give its substance in as few words as possible, though with some touches, which Mr. Jones's modesty suppressed about himself.

Mr. Mark Jones had, as we already know, a brother older than himself by some years, who went to seek his fortune in London, and had been established there for some time as a wine merchant, when the younger brother set out for the capital, bent on a similar errand. Nay, it even clearly resulted from some of our Mr. Jones's reluctantly made admissions, that this elder brother had been of some use to the younger, on his *début* in the vast theatre of the metropolis. However this may be, it came to pass that in proportion to the rise of the younger's fortunes, was the decline of those of the elder, owing to his addictedness to drink.

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of family circumstances, than from compassion, he consented to a small augmentation of the allowance.

After this, the written demands and personal requests for money grew rarer, but did not wholly cease for all that, and it was upon the occasion of one of these interested visits, that Mrs. Jones first noticed and was captivated by the little Lavinia, who had accompanied her father. Lavinia was then seven years old, and a miracle of beauty, gentleness, and intelligence. Even matter-of-fact Mr. Jones was not insensible to her infantine grace, and precocious witty sayings; so no wonder Mrs. Jones, to whom Providence had denied the boon of children, should have earnestly desired to adopt and bring her up as her own child. It is not to be supposed that Mr. Jones yielded at first, or with a good grace, to his wife's wishes, but he did so at last; and after much mean haggling, that bargain was entered into between the two brothers, the clauses of which have been already hinted at by dying Mrs. Jones. When Lavinia was made over by her willing parents to their rich relations, she was immediately consigned to a first-rate boarding-school to receive a brilliant education. Together with this act of adoption, Mr. Jones took another important

step; he parted with the Italian warehouse. He had capital enough to insure his being a man of some importance anywhere, and self-conceit enough to match his capital.

A couple of years after Mr. Jones's name as a tradesman had been erased from the *General Directory*, he received by post a note, entreating his attendance without delay at the residence of a Mary Holywell, who had important revelations to make with respect to Miss Lavinia Jones, without doing which, she did not dare to face death. The appeal, earnestly worded enough, might, as the experienced Mr. Jones was aware, be a snare to draw him into an ambush, from whence no escape without undrawing his purse; it might even be one of his worthy brother's stratagems to force from him a few more pounds; and Mr. Jones had fifty minds to throw note and request to the winds. But there is fascination in a mystery, and so after wasting some hours in wise pros and cons, Mr. Jones ended by proceeding to the address given by the *soi-disant* Mary Holywell.

It was one of those haunts of vice and misery, which a beast of the field would not have chosen for its lair; one of the foul excrescences, not unfrequently met with on the smooth stuccoed surface

of the proud, rich, and prudish metropolis of Great Britain. At the house, to which he had been directed, Mr. Jones found a woman, evidently in the last stage of consumption, on whose death-stricken face still lingered the traces of great past beauty, and who in a husky voice painfully gasped out the following strange tale.

She had known the elder Mr. Jones and his wife well, having occupied for years a house in common with them in Whitechapel. She herself had at that time been living with a man, a Spitalfields weaver, who was not her husband, and she and her fellow-lodger Mrs. Jones, had been confined within a week or two of one another, and admiring the name given to the Jones's baby, she had called hers also Lavinia. Lavinia Jones, always a puny, sickly child, died before it was quite a twelvemonth old, a great distress to the father, who became alarmed that the increase of allowance, made on account of his child, would be withdrawn by his brother, as soon as he knew of the poor little creature's death. Under this pressure, Jones proposed to her to let the deceased child pass for hers, and to give him up her living infant, for the consideration of a weekly allowance. She was sickly, pleaded Mary Holywell, unable to work, and otherwise utterly

destitute. The man she lived with had left her and gone to California. God forgive her, but she was sorely tried, and yielded to Jones's tempting tongue. She did not feel much what she had done, as long as her girl lived with her fellow-lodgers, but her heart had begun to trouble her, when Mr. Mark Jones took the child, believing it to be his own blood, and now she couldn't die with the lie on her conscience.

Well, we have not recorded much good of Mark Jones: he was compassionate in this instance, he sent a medical man to attend on Mary Holywell; but the poor troubled spirit, relieved from its burden of a bad secret, passed away on the very following day.

Mr. Jones was a man of business habits, therefore he went at once to the registrar's office for the parish of Whitechapel, to seek confirmation of the allegations made by Mary Holywell. There he found, and had copies taken of the certificates, which he now laid before his present wretched listener, —one of Lavinia Jones's death, and one of Lavinia Holywell's birth. His next act was to go to his brother's, with the two damnatory documents in his hand, and there he swore a frightful oath, that if the guilty wretch ever breathed a syllable of this

foul transaction, or even showed his face again in his (Mark Jones's) neighbourhood, he would try what punishment the law awarded for such knavery. This done, he debated with himself what his own course should be, and he came to the conclusion—half from liking to the child, half from dread of the scandal which might arise—that the wisest thing to do was to hold his tongue, and keep his knowledge to himself, even to the exclusion of his wife; and this determination he had steadily adhered to, up to this moment of revelation to Lavinia herself.

A thunderbolt does not carry stronger conviction of its reality to the senses of the terror-stricken wayfarer, at whose feet it falls, than did the truthfulness and authenticity of Mr. Jones's statement to the almost stunned mind of Lavinia. She took in, nevertheless, at one glance and for ever, its whole purport, and was spared at least the struggles of suspense. All failed her at once—the past, the present, the future, even her own identity. The very affection, which from the other side of the grave cast a ray of light into the *camera oscura* of her life, was no longer hers—she had no right to it. Her inner as well as her outer world reeled and crumbled about her. Despair clutched the poor

girl's heart, and hiding her face with her hands, she burst into a passion of tears.

Mr. Jones tried to console her in his way. There was no occasion for her to put herself in such a state; it was mere folly; for what, after all, was there changed in her situation?—nothing but a name. Had he not known of her real condition for these eleven years past, and yet had he not gone on with her education, just as if she had been his real niece; made her the thorough lady she was, and which she might remain to the end of her days, if she only trusted to him? His house was hers as before, his fortune at her disposal, as it had been, and so on. Lavinia sobbed out her thanks as best she could, but said, the shock had been too sudden, had taken her so unawares, that she must have time and quiet to think, and to regain composure. Certainly, poor thing, agreed Mr. Jones. He showed himself, under the circumstances, both discreet and attentive. He called to see her the next day, and the next, but only stayed a few minutes, as he explained, to satisfy himself that she was not ill, and wanted for nothing. By and by, he relapsed into his usual Sunday visit.

Thus two months passed by—two months full for Lavinia of anxious consultations with herself.

One point was perfectly clear to her perception. She could not go on with any propriety living under the same roof with, and eating the bread of one to whom she was no kin, who had been, in fact, by a fraud, forced, as it were, to become her benefactor. Independently of her innate self-respect, which forbade such a course, she would, so she felt, at least, by continuing to occupy a place which was not hers by right, be a party, passive indeed, but still a party, to a deceit upon the world. But where was she to go? how was she to support herself? She had none from whom to ask advice and guidance; because to none had she the courage to reveal the shame of her birth. None but Mr. Jones. Why then not trust him? He had correspondents, connections, interests in every quarter of the globe; of all people he was the best able to help her, and having the power, why should she doubt his good will? He had shown himself to her a real friend. Thus arguing with herself, she came to the conclusion that she would make him the confidant of her wish to find some situation—abroad.

Mr. Jones's conduct well justified his claim to the title of friend, that she had bestowed on him. She had surely misjudged the man. He was unobtrusively attentive, kind, at times almost tenderly so.

He brought her newspapers, books, and the choicest flowers; he never interfered with her wishes by word or deed, even seemed quite reconciled to her plan of seclusion. He availed himself of every opportunity to encourage and reassure her as to her future. He had even repeatedly hinted at a something in store for her—a something that might greatly surprise, but he fondly hoped would not be displeasing to her. She knew not what to make of this innuendo, unless it was an allusion to some offer of marriage he had received for her. If so, the moment, in her opinion, was ill chosen, but it would be a reason the more why she should let him know her intentions.

One afternoon, before dinner, she summoned all her courage, and told him she wished to speak to him about herself. He did not look at all disturbed—of the two, rather pleased. He said that, though he was not her uncle, that did not militate against his being her friend—a tenderer friend than perhaps she surmised, and as he spoke, he took one of her hands in his.

“I am sure you are my friend,” replied Lavinia, “and indeed I am grateful to you for your kindness; at the same time you must acknowledge, that your being only my friend, and unfortunately not

my uncle, must prevent my remaining with you on the same footing as if I were in reality your niece."

"Well, I allow it," replied Mr. Jones, and added quickly, in a would-be passionate tone, "why may I not become to you something better than uncle or friend?"

She did not seize his meaning.

"Is there not a more sacred and dearer title that you can bestow on me?" asked he, in a still tenderer tone; "a title which will confer on me the right to protect you in the face of the whole world?"

She looked alarmed and perplexed, like one who cannot take in the sense of earnest words, spoken in an unknown language.

"I am healthy, and strong," went on the tempter, "and many a younger lady than you are, has married an older man than I am, and not rued the bargain; quite the contrary. What do you say to it, eh?"

She remained as if made of stone for a while; then violently disengaging her hand, and recoiling from his effort to repossess himself of it as from the touch of a serpent, she sprang to the other end of the room, saying,—

“Oh! never—never—rather die!”

Mr. Jones turned the colour of lead, and strode towards her with a menacing air—all the worst passions which degrade man’s nature flashed from his eyes.

“Don’t rouse the devil in me,” he shouted, “or by——”

He made an effort to control himself, retreated a step or two, and burst into a coarse laugh.

“I am a precious donkey to take your big words seriously; you’ll not find it easy to bully me, I warn you. I mean to have you for my wife, and, will you, nill you, my wife you shall be. I give you a night and a day for meditation on the difference between abandonment, beggary, starvation, and every luxury of life, a jolly husband, and lots of friends. You’ll say ‘yes’ to me with a good grace, I dare say.” And he left her.

Lavinia locked herself into her room, watching with a throbbing heart for the sound of wheels, to let her know that he was gone. Sooner than she had hoped, she heard his gig drive away. Then she threw herself on her knees, and first prayed long and fervently, then putting a few articles of clothing into a small carpet-bag, she glided out of the house, and walked as fast as she could to the nearest railway

station. Within another hour she was at the London terminus. There she took a cab, telling the coachman to drive to Camden Town. The name had slipped involuntarily from her lips, in the effort to remember some out-of-the-way place. She had never been in Camden Town, did not know whether it was a single street, or a suburb consisting of many streets.

The coachman asked whereabouts he was to stop in Camden Town; "it were a loose sort of direction."

"I will pull the check-string," said the perplexed girl.

She was made aware of having reached her destination by the obstinate turning of the cabman to peep in at her. She stopped him at once, paid him his demand, took her carpet-bag, and walked straight on, not quite sure whether she was awake or in a dream. The cabman stared after her, shook his head, then set his horse again in motion, satisfied that it was no business of his to care what became of his out-of-the-way passengers.

Lavinia's legs tottered under her, as she looked to the right and the left, trying for the courage to knock at one of the many houses, in the windows of which were notices of apartments to let. No bench

near for the tired, yet rest she must; she was ready to drop on the pavement—still wandering on, wandering on. She was now in a row of two-storeyed, neat little houses; looking over the railing, she could see the four walls of the front parlours; anything so diminutive must be cheap. She knocked at one of these small dwellings, and said she wanted a room. It was the landlady herself who opened the door; after a close and suspicious inspection of the inquirer, she answered that she never let rooms to single ladies. A second application farther down the row met the same fate. The third time she was permitted to see a room, but when, in reply to the query of what luggage she had, she allowed that she had nothing but the carpet-bag in her hand, she was told, civilly enough, that the room was already all but let to another party, and that she had better try elsewhere. A fourth attempt succeeded. The landlady of No. 25 was either more needy or less distrustful; to be sure, she required an assurance that the young lady received no visits, and was willing to pay a fortnight's rent in advance. Lavinia drew out her purse, and paid the money immediately—not without difficulty, indeed, everything round her reeled so. After this preliminary, she was admitted into a clean, tidy

room, surprisingly cheap to the poor tyro in poverty. If she wanted for anything, there was a bell, said the landlady. Nothing; Lavinia wanted nothing, only rest, she said, as she laid herself down on the horse-hair sofa.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOUND AND LOST AGAIN.

THE reader may perhaps owe us a grudge for having so long kept Mr. Thornton out of sight, and for having left unsolved a riddle or two connected with that gentleman. Had he really gone to the United States in search of Paolo, as the last visa of his passport, entered at the *Bureau des Passeports*, would lead one naturally to believe? And, if so, what could have been his motive, and that of the clerk of the consulate, and of the solicitors in London, for making a mystery of his destination? We are going to meet categorically, and we hope satisfactorily, this double query; our only reason for not having done so before, being that we cannot relate the history of several people at one and the same time.

Mortimer had, after leaving the Rue de Rohan for the Rue Neuve des Augustins, still continued

to receive communications connected with his advertisement about Paolo, most of them unworthy of notice, but which he persevered in forwarding to the police. One letter, however, dated from Havre, alike from its feeling tone, and the quarter from whence it assumed to come, commanded his attention. The writer, who styled himself the agent of a company for emigration to the United States, and who professed himself to be a philanthropist, explained how his sympathy had been aroused by the perseverance of the advertiser, and how consequently he had set on foot an inquiry in his own office, with the view of ascertaining whether any one answering to the description of the person missing had applied for a passage in any of the company's steamers. The result of the inquiry was, that, in fact, a young man whose appearance tallied with the description given of Signor Paolo Mancini, had called at the office on the 26th of March last, and had secured a second-class berth for New York in the *Atalanta*. The name of this person, as appeared from the books, was Paolo Manni, and not Mancini; but the slight difference in the surnames might be, perhaps, owing to some incorrectness of the clerk who had registered the passenger. Unfortunately, wrote Thornton's unknown correspondent, he had not himself seen the

Italian, but should the advertiser think it worth his while to follow out this clue, and come to Havre, the clerk above mentioned would be too happy to impart all his recollections as to the personal appearance of the gentleman booked as Paolo Manni. Here followed the signature of the writer, and the street and number of the office at which application was to be made. A postscript further intimated that the steamer *Nonchalant* would leave Havre for New York on the day after the morrow.

Mortimer thought the indications too precious to allow of a moment's hesitation. He went straight to the police, had his passport *viséd* for the United States, in order to be ready for instant embarkation, if necessary, and then set off for Havre, where he was not long before he ascertained that he was the victim of a heartless hoax. The signature, the street, the number, and the office, were one and all a fabrication. Thornton came back utterly discomfited, and more sombre and dejected than ever. He took to going frequently to the Morgue. The ill-omened spot, and the lurid sights it presented had a sort of savage fascination for him. The impression, which he had had from the first, that Paolo had thrown himself into the river, returned again and again with the pertinacity and vigour of

mania, and his diseased fancy could not help speculating upon how Paolo's dead body would look, stretched on the lugubrious flagstones of the sinister establishment. Thornton was there one morning when a body, just dragged out of the river, was being carried in. It had lain in the water but a few hours, and was not at all disfigured. It was the corpse of a young girl, not yet twenty, middle-sized, slender, and strikingly handsome. The wet masses of her rich auburn hair adhering to her temples and neck, brought out in strong relief the alabaster delicacy of her complexion. She was dressed in white. Great was the concourse of people round the beautiful dead girl, unanimous the pity, and loud the guesses as to the cause of her untimely end. A disappointment in love was, of course, the solution given.

Long and wistfully did Mortimer gaze at the solemnly quiet face, and lo! as he gazed, a strange work of transformation, such as we have examples of in our dreams, slowly accomplished itself in the solemnly quiet face, until the unknown features shaped and settled themselves into those familiar ones, which had been for the last nine years engraved in outlines of fire on his brain and heart. All notion of time was obliterated withal, and it

seemed but yesterday that she, whom he identified in the corpse now lying on those cold stones before him, was hanging, a happy, confiding girl, on his arm; and he had had the heart, madman that he was, to fling her from him, and consign her to despair. And here was his work! and so then he was standing a convicted murderer before his victim! Under the sway of this horrible delusion, Mortimer rushed forth and precipitated himself into the Seine!

In large and crowded cities, a man may drop from sheer exhaustion, and breathe his last on the unfriendly pavement little heeded; but if he takes to the river for his death-bed, he is sure to be interfered with by the very persons who would have shrugged their shoulders, and passed on the other side, in the first case. The reason of the difference is obvious; the inhabitants of large towns are *blaséd* and fearful of being imposed upon; a man writhing and foaming at the mouth in the street may be an impostor, whereas he who plunges into running water cannot but be in downright earnest; and once the possibility of a trick removed, human sensibilities reassert their rights and get fair play. No sooner was Thornton in the water, than a double shout was raised from a multitude of anxious spectators lining both banks of the Seine, and several

boats and swimmers put off to the rescue. A barge full of timber was coming up the river; the man at the helm manœuvred, so as to place the barge sideways. Thornton, borne swiftly down the current, was stopped awhile by this impediment, then sank under it. A loud cry from the shores testified to the universal horror; a boat shot forward to the spot where Thornton had disappeared, and one of the men in her jumped into the water and dived. There was a moment of thrilling silent suspense, and then the brave fellow reappeared, and not alone. A real shout of triumph and admiration rent the air. With a stroke or two of the oars, the men left in the boat brought her close enough to preserved and preserver to lift them safely in, and in five minutes more the still unconscious Englishman, followed by the excited multitude, was being carried to the nearest *corps de garde*.

A commissioner of police was already there, who, as soon as Mortimer recovered his senses, proceeded to an interrogatory. Mortimer's replies were at first collected and to the point. He said who he was, and where he lived, and cautioned the functionary not to interfere with the liberty of a British subject. But when questioned as to what had impelled him to attempt self-destruction, he began

raving that he was a murderer, and that he had passed sentence of death upon himself. He referred the commissioner to the Morgue, where he would see his (Thornton's) victim. The commissioner, though strongly impressed with the belief that he had to deal with a person in a state of insanity, sent one of his staff to the Morgue, who brought back information which completely proved the groundlessness of Mortimer's self-accusation. He was accordingly conveyed in a carriage to his lodgings, and left there under the strict surveillance of two police agents in plain clothes, lest he should renew his attempt against his life. In the meantime, the English embassy was officially informed of what had occurred, and a clerk of the British consulate, the very same to whom Paolo and Prudence had applied for information about Thornton, was sent to the Rue Neuve des Augustins.

Mortimer answered all this gentleman's inquiries rationally; said he had no near relations that he knew of; and when asked to do so, made no difficulty to give the address of his solicitors in London; but once put on the track of his late rash act, immediately accused himself of murder, launching forth in the same wild strain as before. As Thornton seemed to have no friends about him, the best thing

to do was to telegraph to Messrs. Henstrid and Co. information of the state of their client.

One of the firm from Golden Square came at once to Paris and had the unfortunate gentleman examined by the English physician of the embassy, and by the eminent Frenchman, Dr. Ternel, whose specialty was the treatment of mental diseases. Both these gentlemen agreed that Mr. Thornton was labouring under delusions, and could not with safety to himself be left without restraint. Upon this a sort of family council was held, composed of the commissioner of police, the clerk of the consulate, and the representative of the firm of Henstrid and Co., and attended by the two physicians, who had already examined into the case. It was then unanimously decided on, that the best course to pursue, was to place the English gentleman under the care of Dr. Ternel, and for that purpose to have him removed to a *maison de santé*, immediately under that celebrated man's direction. Owing to the infinite tact and persuasive ways of Mr. Ternel, no difficulty or demur was made to the carrying out of this plan, by him whom it chiefly concerned.

The nature of Thornton's malady, one of those which relations and friends strive to conceal to the very last, accounts for the evasive and ambiguous

answers of Messrs. Henstrid and Co. and of the clerk of the consulate.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that Mortimer's seclusion put an end to all further advertisements, or inquiries about Paolo. More than this, one of the strangest symptoms of Thornton's derangement was the dread and terror, with which the recollection of Paolo was attended. He was often busied writing out petitions for protection against the persecution he endured, and claiming from Dr. Ternel the promise that he would prevent Paolo from having access to him.

Madame Françoise had felt keenly for her lodger, nor did she desert him in this his time of need. She was frequently at the *Maison de Santé*, striving to comfort him with a woman's ingenious kindness. But a month having elapsed without any apparent improvement in his condition, and her questions as to the probability of a speedy recovery meeting with no more explicit answer from Dr. Ternel than a doubtful shake of the head, the good lady lost heart and went to Evreux to redeem her long-made promise to be with her daughter during her approaching confinement.

Dr. Ternel did not shake his head in despair of Thornton's case, but in despair at not being able

to seize on the indispensable clue for handling and mastering it. Such details as Madame Françoise had been able to relate of Thornton, previous to his outbreak of madness in the Morgue, though of service in forming a partial diagnosis, were of too scattered a nature, and too disconnected with the immediate cause of Thornton's disorder, to afford the doctor a good standing ground. Material evidence it was that Dr. Ternel wanted, in order to counteract effectually the lunatic's delusions. Till he could lay hold of that, and there was little likelihood of his doing so, he had scarcely any hope of a favourable result to his treatment. The unlucky Englishman seemed an isolated being. Apart from the quarterly payments made regularly for him, no one inquired about, or cared for him. Poor deserted Thornton!

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE LEFT BANK OF THE SEINE.

Was Paolo really in gay, turbulent, noisy Paris, or had he fallen from the clouds into some convent on the top of Mount Lebanon? Such was the question that he often put to himself during the first days of his new employment. The house inhabited by Mr. Boniface was the quietest of a quiet collection of houses, through a court, down an alley, between another court and a garden, in quiet Rue Cassette; and the quietest nook in this quietest of houses, was allotted to Paolo for his daily avocations. The cell of an anchorite, as far as silence and retirement go, could alone stand a comparison with his little study. Not the faintest echo of the noisy world without found a way to it, and within, no sound but that of the scraping of a pen against paper. The maids who shook carpets out of the opposite windows, did so with a care;

the very sparrows which lighted on the solitary tree in the centre of the noiseless court below, seemed impressed by the stillness that reigned, and chirped *sotto voce*.

Paolo had never come in contact before with a real devotee of science, and for the first time had an idea of that tranquil, unremitting race after knowledge, which the life of an intellectual pioneer can be. The specimen he had under his eye interested him the more. Scientific speculation was with Mr. Boniface a process as natural, indispensable, and continuous as respiration. Shut up as in a coat of mail in his world of thoughts and calculations, the only realities for him, he forgot the external world and its exigencies, and would have dropped exhausted over his volume or his slate, without a surmise of the why and the wherefore, had not his sister been at hand to warn him that it was time to breakfast or to dine. A fish out of water was not more helpless than he was, when summoned from the lofty regions in which his spirit soared, and forced to take into consideration any detail of common life—such, for instance, as the being measured for a coat—then he would search after something sensible to say, and invariably miss it; but set him on any of his favourite themes—and all scientific

subjects were so—or ask an explanation of his own speculations, and he would warm up and develop the most ingenious theories with true eloquence.

Of an afternoon, Mr. Boniface often had visitors, and as his study was contiguous to that of his amanuensis, and the conversation, owing to his deafness, was carried on in a loud voice, Paolo had naturally his share of it. Mr. Boniface's friends were for the most part men of science like himself—naturalists, archæologists, orientalists, mathematicians—each having a particular hobby of his own. Mr. Pertuis, of the Place Royale, he who had introduced Paolo to Mr. Boniface, was one of the most assiduous visitors at Rue Cassette. Often would Paolo lay down his pen to listen, and derive the greatest gratification from what he heard. Not that he could understand or take in the hundredth part of what was said on these occasions—he would have been quite another and a more accomplished man than he was, had he been able to do so; it was the lofty standard of their callings, the entireness of their devotion to the interests of the mind, the all-absorbing character of their pursuits, the depth of their convictions, their enthusiasm, their patience, their simplicity, which commanded Paolo's sympathy and admiration. Paolo felt instinctively that these

were the salt of the city, and that to the patient investigations of such men might be traced the germ of all the great discoveries that honoured and benefited mankind. Thus Paolo, in his humble capacity of copyist, had a revelation, and a bird's-eye view, of the world of intelligence.


In other and more personal respects also, he had every reason to be satisfied with his present lot. Setting aside the difficulty of quick communication with one who was half blind, tolerably deaf, and always absent in mind—a difficulty, however, which each day's habit lessened—his duties were easy enough; and the regard shown him by brother and sister soon made them pleasant. Mr. Boniface never came to him with a change to make, of which he had bethought himself after more pondering, without offering an apology for being so tiresomely particular, and without uttering many self-reproaches for thus taxing Mr. Mancini's obligingness. Mademoiselle on her side never let him depart at six o'clock, without expressing her own and her brother's thanks for his kind attendance. Mr. Pertuis also was very civil, and rarely called without slipping into Paolo's study to shake hands with its inmate. Thanks and smiles and handshaking, you will say, don't prove much regard: agreed; but

they do good all the same, and go far to sweeten dependence. Nor were these outward signs of goodwill the only tokens of satisfaction received by the *pro tempore* secretary. At the end of the second fortnight, his salary was raised, from sixty to seventy-five francs, an item of some importance to one whose heart was bent on amassing funds as fast as possible for a journey from Paris to Rome.

In spite of this augmentation, however, and of the strictest economy, Paolo's savings at the end of the month proved much less than he had anticipated. More claims than he had reckoned upon had drained his purse—the cobbler's wife opposite, who blacked his shoes, and cleaned his room, had to be paid, and there was an occasional wax-candle, and his washing. This last expense was a very heavy one. Besides, manage as best he could, it was, after all, an impossibility to go on decently with a change of linen, and a worn-out pair of boots. And a pair of shoes, at the lowest price, was seven francs, and three shirts, at three francs and a half each, had made altogether a large outlay. If one could only do without eating; but no, one must eat every day, and several times a day. Truth to say, Paolo had reduced this necessity to its simplest expression. A hot roll—poor Salvator's

breakfast, minus the roasted chesnuts not to be found in Paris at that time of the year—a hot roll munched on his way to Rue Cassette in the morning—two other rolls at twelve, swallowed before a book-stall on the quays, his usual and most economical circulating library; or while walking in front of yonder noble pile, the Louvre—and at half-past six in the evening, such a luxurious dinner as we have described already—constituted his daily food, at the cost of eighteen sous *per diem*. It is possible that some of the materials of the last-mentioned repast were not always unimpeachable, but the condiment of hunger seasoned them. Neither bitters, nor absynth, nor vermuth render the stomach of a youth of twenty-four so optimist as a fast of ten hours broken only by three halfpenny rolls.

Paolo had taken a local affection for the old-fashioned and comparatively tranquil part of the town in which chance had thrown him, and seldom went out of its precincts. The Seine was his Rubicon. He liked to stroll of an evening over the half-deserted quays, and watch, from one or other of the bridges, the setting of the sun behind the heights of Chaillot, to contemplate the imposing silhouette of Notre Dame by moonlight, and follow the reflection of the lamps in the dark rolling waters



below. His rambles and his admiration were not unfrequently shared by a companion, his neighbour of the "*Bonne nuit, voisin!*" a young student from Evreux, as he afterwards proved to be, who was supposed to be accomplishing his *droit* at Paris—equivalent, I fancy, to keeping Law Terms in Lincoln's Inn—and, under cover of that convenient legal fiction, sowing his wild oats.

A more sociable, sanguine, thoughtless, and original Bohemian than Théophile Courant had never pitched his tent in the Quartier Latin. As long as his quarter's allowance lasted—which, when he was most prudent, might be a fortnight—he had a merry life of it, refusing himself nothing; the rest of the time he shifted as best he could, living on fried potatoes and credit; a change of diet which in nowise affected his humour: merrily and carelessly as he had gone through his seven years of plenty, to use his own phrase, merrily and carelessly he traversed his seven years of famine.

The Frenchman disapproved of the Italian's somewhat ascetic ways and retired habits of life, and would fain have enticed him into forming acquaintances among the *grisettes* frequenting the *Marché aux Fleurs* close by. It was to that humble stage, that the *soi-disant* student, weaned for the time

being from the joys and conquests of the *Chaumière* and the *Closerie aux Lilas*, confined his exploits, seeking there thrice a week easy *bonnes fortunes*. He had, in truth, plenty of them, and was fond of relating his triumphs. The mixture of a Sardana-palus and a Diogenes in him, not to speak of the attractions of a *pâté de foie gras*, and *rognons sautés aux truffes* in his days of abundance, took amazingly with the fair and loving spinsters of the Quartier Latin. Paolo did not envy him his successes. Love, to his mind, meant something better, he would say, than a temporary association for the sake of pleasure; upon which Théophile nicknamed him *farouche Hippolyte*, favouring him with much ridicule and laughing at his own jokes. Courant was a clever fellow, full of talk, of wit, of paradox, boldly flying at all subjects, and agreeing with Paolo on none, save that of politics. All epicurean and sceptic as he boasted himself to be, the young Frenchman had strong political convictions of the same decided hue as those of his new friend.

As usual during what he termed his temporary eclipses, Courant was in a concentrated literary mood—had, in fact, on the stocks, at one and the same time, a poem, a comedy, and a novel—and spiced his pennyworth of fried potatoes with

visions of the Cross of the Legion of Honour, and a seat at the Institute. He loved to dilate on his plots, especially on that of his *Prédestiné*, a novel of passion. According to him, passion was the only field in which Balzac had left anything to glean. All other forms of fiction, whether of worldly life or private life, whether of morals or philosophy, that great dissector of the human heart had exhausted. Balzac was Courant's prophet, and the *Physiology of Marriage* the book of books with him.

Well, then, to return to the student's favourite theme. The "Prédestiné" was a Parisian poet, young, handsome, rich, and highly gifted withal, intensely unhappy from the absence of that sister soul, caressed in dreams, and which was to complete his existence. Stormy had been his youth, an Ixion-like race after his half-ball; he had demanded it from the aristocratic salons of Europe, from the workshop, the thatched cottage, from the pampas of America, and the orgies of the *salon doré*. All in vain: the "Prédestiné" walked through life gloomy, incomplete, alone. One day, as he emerged from the depths of a forest, he heard a merry peal of bells from a little village church. He enters it—there is a wedding going on. The clerk to the notary of the village, a common-looking personage

enough, is being married to the daughter of his employer, a slender, pale, and far from handsome blonde. The "Prédestiné"—mark this—objects, always has objected, to blondes in general; but the more he looks at this one, strange to say, the more he feels attracted. Surely there is something fatal in the fascination she exercises over him. His whole soul flies towards her as to its centre. In short, as the benediction is pronounced, he has received a full irrefragable revelation, that the bride of the notary's clerk is his the "Prédestiné's" heaven-destined better half.

"How was it revealed to him, the fool?" interrupted Paolo.

Courant, unmoved, continued:—

"Like a wolf who does not lose sight of his prey, he follows the bridal party to the little country inn, where the modest family banquet is to take place. As he does so, contending thoughts sweep over his brain, like wind-driven clouds over the sky. No, he will not be defrauded of his own—his rights, registered in heaven, are anterior to those of that paltry *épicier*. She shall be his. Acting upon this resolve, the 'Prédestiné' forthwith procures a quantity of a narcotic; hires a small chamber contiguous to the dining-room, where the

wedding repast is to take place; pours some of the soporific in the champagne glasses, ten in number, and lies in wait for the effect. The dinner proceeds slowly and prosily, at last he hears the report of the champagne corks—toasts are drunk—and then little by little the murmur of voices subsides, one head after another drops on the table, and the whole company is fast asleep. The ‘Prédestiné’ seizes the moment, pounces upon his prey, lifts her up in his arms, and carries off his precious charge to his retreat.”

“An infernal trick, worthy of ten thousand guillotines,” cried Paolo.

“Rather so,” said Théophile; “‘strike hard to strike home,’ is my motto. I see my plot is a taking one. I have not done yet—there’s something still more spicy in store. Hearken to this:” “After a time, the bridegroom, awaking, misses his bride, seeks her with tottering steps, notices a door ajar, pushes it, and enters. The door was that of the chamber of the ‘Prédestiné,’ which he had forgotten to lock. A tiger disturbed in his den is not more terrible than the ‘Prédestiné’ at sight of his rival; the clutch of a tiger’s claws not more deadly than the grasp of the ‘Prédestiné’s’ fingers round the intruder’s throat. A struggle of ten seconds, a

stified groan, and there lies the morning's bridegroom—a corpse.” “What do you say to that, eh? I hope it is lively and passionate enough for a first chapter,” chuckled Courant.

“I say it is unnatural, absurd, abominable, nonsensical. What is the use of this string of impossible horrors? *Cui bono?*”

“He asks *cui bono?*” retorted Courant, laughing. “Why, to carry away the reader from the first, to lay violent hands on his attention, to have a sale of twenty thousand copies; in a word, to succeed.”

“You will never do so by means of giving people nightmares,” said innocent Paolo; “there are other and purer sources of interest, thank God, than treachery, murder, and such like amenities. Listen to this;” and enthusiastic, and overflowing with recollections, as all true Italians are, of the *Promessi Sposi*, Paolo gave his friend an outline of Manzoni’s celebrated novel; namely, the simple story of two obscure existences, a poor silk-weaver and his affianced bride, momentarily brought in contact with, and dragged along by, the current of the evil passions of a rude age, and making their way out of the turbid whirlpool through humble faith and love, and landing in safety after many trials, wiser, better, humbler, happier.

"I daresay it is all very fine," observed Théophile; "but it has a radical defect; it might compete for the *prix Monthyon*—it is too moral."

"Too moral!" exclaimed Paolo, his eyes widening with amazement.

"Yes: far too moral, and tame in proportion," averred Courant; "no cloves and pepper; no *chic*; no touch of what I call *real* passion in it; none of the *positions risquées*, in which the public delight. The author had a precious gold vein within his reach, in the love affair of La Signora with Cavaliere Egidio—the passion of a nun; a capital hit, if properly developed. But no; he did not see it."

"He rejected, he spurned it," said Paolo, with warmth; "never would Manzoni have so lowered himself."

"So much the more stupid. Morality, as a rule, is unbearable in a work of fiction. The very reviewers, who praise it professionally, laugh at it in their sleeves. The palate of the public is blunted, palled, my dear friend; it requires, and must have, stimulants. Every nose turns up at your boiled beef; no—no! you must give viands with *sauce piquante*; game that is high; stuffed with truffles into the bargain; plenty of cayenne,—that is what is wanted."

"Rather than gratify such tastes, I would throw away all pens, and black shoes for ever," cried uncivilized Paolo.

"I am more of a philosopher than to do that," said Courant. "History teaches me that every age has its crotchets. I am of my age, and accept it as I find it without discussion. Such of its foibles as can help me up, I take advantage of; that's my philosophy."

"Your scepticism, you mean. And the dignity of letters, the eternal moral, the right divine of the beautiful and the true; what becomes of them, pray, in your system?" interrogated Paolo.

Courant looked at him with compassionate interest, and said,—

"I never saw such fly-swallowers as you Italians, with your inexhaustible stock of enthusiasm. There's something in it, though, artistically speaking, and I have a mind to put you in my next novel. In sober truth, let me tell you, that you drivel—*tu patauges*. The high-flown theories about Art of a few visionaries, a few fanatics, are no gospel. My theory is far simpler, all summed up in that famous verse of the great master: *Tous les genres sont bons hors le genre ennuyeux*."

"Down to the cynical," expostulated Paolo.

"And why not, so long as the form is good, and success attends it? Did not Horace skirt it, Ovid dive into it, Longus, the sophist, revel in it? and don't we admire them to this day?" asked Courant.

"But they were pagans, my dear friend. And so then you reduce literature to an affair of style?"

"And success," quoth Courant.

"And the Venus de' Medici, and the Hottentot Venus, provided they attract the crowd, are equally welcome in your eyes?"

"*Dixisti.*"

In spite of these disagreements, or perhaps owing to them, the two neighbours were on the most friendly terms, sought after each other, and regularly spent the Sundays, Paolo's only holiday, in walking through the galleries of the Louvre and Luxembourg. Théophile was even introduced to Mr. Prosper and his wife, at whose establishment Paolo generally ended his evening strolls.

Thus time wore on up to the middle of August, when our Roman painter, who had almost forgotten that he was one, found himself master of the round sum of a hundred and twenty-two francs. This, according to his calculations, was more than sufficient for his journey to Rome. His economies of the fortnight just entered upon, and which he reckoned

would amount to some forty francs, were destined for an object, on which his heart had long been set; for the purchase of some useful article for the self-denying Madame Prudence. Nor must it be supposed that Paolo had been remiss in showing gratitude in substantial ways towards Prosper's family—many a franc had been spent on the little ones, which otherwise would have accelerated his hour of hoped-for freedom. We have done as Paolo himself, laid no stress on what was so immeasurably below his wishes and their claims.

Such being the satisfactory state of his affairs, it occurred to our Roman, that it might be as well to go betimes, and look after his passport. Accordingly, one morning, instead of indulging in his habitual lounge between the Pont Neuf and the Pont des Tuileries, while he made his noonday repast of the two halfpenny rolls, he took them and himself through the Rue de l'Université, his road to the residence of the Pontifical Nuncio in Paris. Introduced to a gentleman in black, he gave his name, calling, and address at Rome, explaining that he had come to Paris in the preceding March, had lost his passport, and wanted to replace it in order that he might go back to Rome.

The affair seemed a very simple one to the appli-

cant; not so to the gentleman who received the application. He did not mince the matter, but said at once that what was asked was impossible. Before furnishing any one with a passport, it was indispensable, the gentleman in black explained, first, that it should be clearly ascertained that the applicant was the person he represented himself to be; secondly, that he did not belong to any of the categories of refugees, who were excluded from the Papal States. The first desideratum might and would be, he had no doubt, in the present instance, satisfactorily fulfilled by unexceptionable guarantees; but none could supply the second, save the government of his Holiness, to which it would be his duty to submit the case, and apply for instructions.

A poor devil who has been living for two months on a hope, and sees it torn from him at the very moment he expects its realization, may well be pardoned a moment of impatience, when he asks, rather snappishly, as Paolo did, what possible length of time this weighty affair of State was likely to require. The patient answer was, that no time could be fixed, but if Signor Paolo Mancini would give himself the trouble to call again at the end of three weeks, or a month, there might probably be some communication to impart on the subject of his application.

This conclusion of the interview having by no means improved Paolo's temper, he made his exit chewing something between his teeth, which was not precisely a blessing, and it may also be that he did not shut the door, but allowed it to close itself with a smart bang. The gentleman of the Nonciatura received from these petty incidents a decidedly sinister impression of Mr. Paolo Mancini, which impression he hastened to convey to his superior, who, in his turn, transmitted it to his chief at Rome. A circumstance, which at first sight would seem as if it ought to have told in Paolo's favour, on the contrary strongly militated against him—it was, that his name did not figure on any of the lists and reports forwarded to the Nonciatura by any of its Paris agents; a proof as clear as day to every one belonging to the Nonciatura, that he must have been skulking elsewhere than in Paris, most likely had been to London for fresh orders and watchwords of insurrection.

No one but philosophic-tempered Théophile could have stood the porcupine mood of Paolo, after this mishap. Beyond calling him now and then *massacrant*, and lecturing him on the excessive absurdity of wishing to go anywhere else, when one had the luck to be in Paris, the student never evinced any

symptom of impatience. Perhaps his equanimity was sustained by the metamorphosis he knew to be near at hand, and which occurred with the arrival of his quarter's allowance. The caterpillar rose up a butterfly, which took its flight to higher regions, after vainly urging Paolo to send Bonifaces and passports to Hades, and learn what life might be.

CHAPTER XIX.

SURPRISE UPON SURPRISE.

As Paolo, one-and-twenty days after his first application for a passport, was walking at full speed down the Rue Jacob, towards the Nonciatura, his progress was suddenly checked by an omnibus crossing the street in a diagonal line. Without waiting for the huge obstruction to leave the road clear, Paolo glided round it, and found himself face to face with the tall horse of a tilbury coming in the opposite direction from the omnibus, and concealed by the big machine. The driver of the tilbury, shouting "*Gare, mal à droit!*" reined in his horse quickly enough to prevent any more serious mischief than the rash passenger's hat being knocked off by the head of the horse.

Paolo picked up his hat, and was proceeding on his way, when a voice cried after him,—

"By the Capitol! it is that enraged Telemachus in search of the Ideal."

Paolo stopped, and in his turn cried,—

"By Jove! it is Du Genre."

"The very same, at your service," said Du Genre; "get in, there's a seat for you, my fine fellow," stretching out his hand to Paolo; and as soon as he had him by his side, bestowing on him a fraternal *accolade*. "Since how long in Paris? And you didn't seek me out, you false friend! Where is Mentor? You look as pale, and thin, and shaved as if you came out of a convent of Trappistes. Lucky that the horse knocked off your hat, or I should never have recognized you under that monument; no wonder you ran against carriages with that Babel structure on your caput."

"Always the same," said Paolo, smiling. "First of all, I must tell you that I am bound for the Nonciatura, and if out of your way——"

"I'll drive you to Mecca if Mecca is your destination," answered the realist; "you are not going to get rid of me so easily, I can tell you. May I, without indiscretion, ask what business takes you to the Nonciatura?"

"To get a passport, if I can, to replace the one I have lost."

"You are not going to leave Paris, are you?" asked Du Genre.

"Most positively so," said Paolo.

"At any rate not yet, for I lay an embargo on you for at least three weeks. You shall not leave Paris without tasting some of its sweets under my direction."

"I have had quite enough of its bitters," said Paolo.

"You talk and look as mysteriously as one of Byron's heroes. Paris, I told you often, is exactly the place for such as you. It will cure you of many of your crotchets; it will send you back to Rome a new man, a wiser man."

"Thank you," said Paolo, "but I have no wish to part with my old skin, or old crotchets. I have an affection for one and the other. But here we are at the Nonciatura."

The two friends alighted and went up to the office. On giving his name, Paolo had a letter handed to him by the same gentleman in black, whom he had seen on his previous visit three weeks before; and who said, that the letter had been waiting there for some time, as, Mr. Mancini's address not being known, there was no possibility of forwarding it. Taking it for granted that it was a written answer to his

former application, Paolo broke the huge black seal, looked at the signature after glancing at the first few lines, then exclaimed, in a tone of disappointment,—

“But this has no reference whatever to my request. What about the passport I have applied for?”

As to the passport, replied the urbane gentleman in the black suit, he was sorry he was obliged to say that it could not be granted. Strict injunctions to the contrary had been received from his government at home.

If ever man was provoked, Paolo was. He fretted and fumed and demanded to know the why and wherefore of this order: a usual weakness in those smarting under injustice; they are always wanting reasons, as if those who inflicted injustice always knew the why.

The business of the gentleman in black was to see orders executed, and not to inquire into their cause. If Signor Mancini considered himself aggrieved, he was at liberty to forward a petition.

Paolo, wishing petitions and petitioners at a certain place not usually mentioned aloud at the Nonciatura, bolted out of the office.

"A precious state of things," he said, getting into the tilbury after his friend, "and for which we have to thank your country, Du Genre."

Du Genre hung his head.

"A famous *boulette* it was," said he, rather sulkily; "nothing like clever people for getting themselves and their friends into a mess. Where do you want to go?"

"Can you drive me to Rue Cassette?"

"Willingly, if you will direct me. I thought I knew the town well, but I never heard of that street before. It must be at the antipodes of Paris, out of the pale of the habitable world. Are you in search of the fossil remains of antediluvian megatheriums?"

"I am going to Mr. Boniface, my employer, who lives there."

Du Genre opened his eyes wide. There was no help for it now. Paolo had to explain, and in so doing, he had necessarily to touch on some of those circumstances—Thornton's disappearance among others—which had rendered a search for means of gaining his daily bread imperative.

Du Genre looked like one fallen from the clouds, but he was not slack in offering his purse, which Paolo declined at once. They were still deep in

interesting topics when they reached Mr. Boniface's door.

"Here is my address," said Du Genre; "but can't I see you again to-day?"

"At a quarter past six on the Pont Neuf," said Paolo, laughing.

"The impressive silence of Pompeii," said Du Genre, looking round him; "the air full of the odour of mummies." Then he called out, as Paolo alighted, "Mind, old fellow, you have dropped your big despatch; by-the-by, you have never read it."

Paolo picked up the letter, saying —

"As far as I could see, it was the notification of Bishop Rodipani's death. It is signed 'Guarini,' a name quite unknown to me."

"Guarini?" repeated Du Genre; "why, that is the name of a celebrated lawyer in Rome. Allow me to observe, friend Telemachus, that it is always an injudicious act to read any letter partially, especially so when it is one announcing the decease of a relation. Who knows but that you are down in the bishop's will for a handsome legacy."

"The most likely thing in the world," said Paolo, shrugging his shoulders.

"More unlikely events have happened," said Du

Genre. "Come, I wager two to one that it is so now ; read it, or let me read it."

"See for yourself," said Paolo, giving Du Genre the letter ; "I can't wait, I am already behind my time."

Du Genre, throwing the reins to his little groom, followed Paolo through the *porte cochère*, the first court, the alley, and the second court, taking in the contents of Signor Guarini's communication the while ; then gave a jump as if a mine had exploded under his feet,—

"It's true, by Jove ! I have won ; you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth. Hail to Bishop Rodipani's illustrious heir !"

"Chut, nonsense," said Paolo, looking back.

"Believe your own eyes. *E-re-de u-ni-ver-sa-le. Excusez du peu.*"

Nothing less than the evidence of his own senses could convince young Mancini of the truth of his friend's assertion. Strange, unlikely, almost unnatural as the fact was, there it was, the clear statement staring him in the face. Who can fathom the mysteries of a death-bed ?

Paolo stood mute and blank, as if confronted by the head of a Medusa.

"What is the matter with the man now ?" cried

the Frenchman; "a fortune has fallen at your feet, and you look as if you saw a ghost."

"I wish Bishop Rodipani had made another will," was Paolo's answer. "I feel as if I ought not to accept this fortune."

"That's a little too *cocasse*," cried Du Genre, in a sort of comic despair; "the man's a lunatic. And pray, why is it incumbent upon you to refuse such a godsend?"

"Because it comes from the persecutor of my parents."

"Listen to him," ejaculated the Frenchman. "Never mind the instrument Providence employs, my Telemachus. Money never smells bad from whatever source it comes, was the remark of a Roman emperor, who was far from being considered a goose. If the donor has given you cause of complaint, reason the more for accepting the peace-offering meant in reparation; would you have him broil in purgatory to all eternity?"

"I will think about it," said Paolo, one foot on the stairs; "I must leave you now."

"I shall go with you," said Du Genre, following; "I am not going to forsake you in this dangerous frame of mind; you are not *compos*, you are not indeed."

"You can't come in with me; it is against all rules," expostulated Paolo, on the landing.

"You'll see whether I can or not," said the realist, pulling the bell. "I tell you, you are not fit for work just now. I'll ask this employer of yours to give you a holiday."

Mr. Boniface's lucky star ordained that the bell should be answered by Mdlle. Boniface, who, to spare her brother all contention of mind, graciously took upon herself to grant Du Genre's request; she was sure, was Mdlle. Marie, of her brother's approbation. Upon this assurance Paolo thanked the lady, and the two friends drove to Du Genre's notary, a fine old gentleman, with white hair and a mild, benevolent countenance, which did any one good only to see. Nor was the face wanting in caution, still less so in acuteness; you might see the one in the slightly pinched lips, and the other in the quick glance of the clear eye.

He listened to a translation of the letter from Rome, and to the comprehensive statement which Du Genre afterwards gave him, with the utmost attention, his eyes half closed, which he opened wide enough, however, when he heard the nature of Paolo's scruples; and looked so searchingly at the young man, as to make him redden and cast down his eyes.

"Had the testator any other relation than this young gentleman?" inquired the old lawyer.

His query being answered in the negative, he added,—

"The question at issue is one that scarcely comes within the domain of a notary; it is nothing more nor less than a case of conscience, the solution of which had better have been asked of a priest. However, as men of my profession have often been styled, and are, in a certain sense, the directors of the consciences of their clients—as to worldly affairs I mean—I think I shall not be passing beyond the boundaries of my own calling, if I give an opinion about this matter. It will be done in a very few words."

Turning himself round so as to address Paolo in particular, he continued,—

"To spurn a fortune, my dear sir, may be, according to the circumstances, a very wise or a very foolish thing. To the enthusiastic and the unreflecting, self-abnegation may seem a virtue, *quand même*, but it is not so. An act, for being generous—for entailing, I mean, a sacrifice on him who does it—is not essentially good; what makes it so, is its consonance to reason. It is consonant to reason, that to avert a great evil or to effect a great good,

which cannot be averted or effected otherwise, one's fortune, or even one's life, should be imperilled or renounced; but it is contrary to reason that any such sacrifice be made—for what?—for the mere pleasure of making it. Now, the more I think of the step you are meditating, sir, the less I see what rational purpose it can answer. It confers no benefit on any one else, while it deprives you of the power of good which resides in money; that's what your sacrifice would accomplish, and *ad quid perditio hæc?* ”

“But,” faltered Paolo, considerably abashed, “the person who has left me his property, was cruel to my parents in a way and to a degree you cannot realize; and whatever reason may say, my feelings make me shrink from accepting from Bishop Rodipani dead, a benefit that I most surely would have scorned from Bishop Rodipani living.”

“Allow me to tell you,” replied the notary, “that a feeling which is in itself a sin, cannot be received as your justification. All earthly resentment should cease before a tomb; this liberality from one formerly little friendly to you or yours, is evidently intended as an amends.”

“Did I not say the very same words to you?” broke in Du Genre.

"It is a token of reconciliation proffered to you from the grave," wound up the old gentleman; "you ought no more to refuse it than a pardon to the dying."

"I must be honest," said Paolo; "I cannot say that my heart is softened to forgive when it is not."

"It will soften in good time," said the notary. "One token of the forgiveness of trespasses commanded to us all you can give at least—respect the will of the dead, it ought to be held sacred."

"Let it be so then," said Paolo, conquered, if not convinced (Du Genre drew a long breath of relief); "I'll abide by your decision, sir."

The letter from Rome contained simple, but minute directions for Mancini's guidance. If the heir could not or would not return to his own country for the present, Signor Guarini informed him that he had but to send a power of attorney to one of Mr. Guarini's friends and colleagues, whom he named, and that gentleman would, in his capacity of Paolo's legal representative, see to the taking off of the seals, the drawing up of the inventory, &c.; in short, would go through all the forms incumbent in such a case. This power of attorney was drawn up then and there by Du Genre's notary, signed by Paolo, attested by Du Genre and the

notary's head clerk, and finally sent to the proper quarter for the necessary legalization.

Paolo then rose to go.

"Stop a minute," said the realist: "since that pearl of lawyers, Signor Guarini, volunteers to advance any sum you may require, which I consider very handsome on his part, had you not better draw on him for a thousand scudi or so?"

"A thousand scudi, and what for?" cried Paolo. "I have got plenty of money at present—more than a hundred francs."

"And how far will five napoleons go in Paris? Well, say five hundred scudi."

"A hundred is more than is necessary," replied Paolo, sitting down to write.

"I insist on five hundred," said Du Genre. "You need not spend them; money costs nothing to keep. Then there's that little fellow—what do you call him?—and his wife, who nursed you; you must deal handsomely by them."

"You are right; what was I thinking of to forget that debt?" and without hesitation he drew a cheque for five hundred scudi, which he left with the notary to be forwarded with the power of attorney. They then took a cordial leave of the old gentleman.

"Ouf," said Du Genre, as soon as they were in the street, "what hard work you have given me. Pythias and Damon, Pylades and Orestes, put together, never stood as much for one another. I am ready to drop from exhaustion; and imprudent that I was, I sent away the tilbury. Half-past four—scarcely a decent time to ask for dinner—but sit and eat I must, or there's no answering for the consequences. Are you for a *suprême de volaille* or a lobster salad?"

Paolo would have preferred to either of the dainties proffered, a quiet *tête-à-tête* with himself, to probe, if possible, a certain uncomfortable feeling, touching the resolve he had been induced to take, and which still lurked somewhere in his heart or in his brain; but this being out of the question without rudeness to his friend, he answered that he left the dinner to Du Genre. They proceeded to the Boulevards des Italiens, and entered a *café*.

"Not considered first-rate," explained the Frenchman, "but the cookery is excellent, and the *dame du comptoir* adorable. Come close and look at her."

But Paolo would not comply, and with his usual shyness, stood aloof from the red velvet shrine at which his companion was offering his devotions.

At any rate, Paolo did not share Du Genre's enthusiasm for the divinity of the counter; on the contrary, he found plenty of defects in her—her eyes wanted depth, her complexion transparency, her head character.

"Of course," said Du Genre laughing, "she is but a woman, and not a picture."

"As to that, I am not quite sure," retorted the Roman.

"*Mauvais farceur !* I assure you she is not painted. Not a bad hit, however. What was I saying? Ah, she is but a beautiful specimen of flesh and blood woman, without an atom of the ideal Madonna in her, and this is what constitutes her fault in your eyes. By dint of cultivating the ideal, you have lost the sense of the real. But never mind, it will return to you by and by."

Paolo shook his head incredulously.

"A little patience and a trifle of good will," persisted the Frenchman, "and you'll recover from your mania. *Il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte.* It is like eating oysters," continued he, the simile suggested by the very thing on the table. "You object to them without knowing yourself why; the moment you taste them, your scruples vanish and you ask for more."

"But supposing I do *not* taste them," said Paolo, sending away his plate untouched.

"Why, in that case—*que diable*—you are prejudiced; that's my opinion at least."

Du Genre was in mourning for that uncle of his who had had the triple indelicacy of summoning him to Dauphiné on the eve of Armida's *début*, of lingering on for months, and of leaving his affairs in a substantially good, but very confused state. The care of putting them in order—Du Genre was a man of method—had kept him in Dauphiné much longer than he wished, and it was only late in June, that is, long after all advertisements for Paolo had ceased, that he had been able to come and settle in Paris. While these explanations were being given, the room was filling apace, and not a table, right or left, opposite or behind, was unoccupied. Paolo felt ill at ease among so many strangers, and hardly opened his mouth, except to eat, during the rest of the dinner. Du Genre talked for two, was quite at home alike with waiters and with customers, exchanging salutations and shakes of the hand with many of the latter. It seemed to Paolo an age before the good-natured rattle proposed to go.

From the *café*, Du Genre led the way to a

tobacconist's on the other side of the Boulevard. As they were going in, he said,—

“Here is another bit of reality, which I recommend to your special notice.”

Paolo looked and saw a richly attired lady behind the counter, who, with the delicate tips of her fingers, carefully guarded from pollution, by neatly fitting gloves, dropped pinches of *caporal* into one of the small scales erected before her. She was good-looking in her way, with a face which the French designate as *minois chiffonné*, which translated, means a turned-up nose, hair drawn back *à la Chinoise*, *accroche cœurs* on the temples, and mutinous dimples. “Would she be so amiable,” asked Du Genre, “as to give him some *panatelas*? he wished to choose them from a fresh box.” The lady, with great affability, sprang up on a chair, stretched her arms up at full length to reach the box, and in so doing displayed a remarkably elegant shape. Du Genre was nudging Paolo during this exhibition.

“And, monsieur,” she said, turning to Paolo, and offering him the *panatelas*, with a bewitching smile.

The monsieur addressed declined at first, saying he did not smoke; upon second thoughts, however, he chose one, and lighted it. This second thought—

and it came with a sigh—was, what was the use of putting any constraint on himself? whether he smelt of tobacco or not, was a matter of indifference to every body, himself included.

And so, cigars in mouth, and arm in arm, the friends lounged up the Boulevard, and down the Boulevard; sat down outside a *café* to sip their Mocha; in course of time got on their legs again for a new lounge, limited as before by the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin on the one side, and by the Rue Richelieu on the other.

“Are these two streets your Pillars of Hercules?” inquired Paolo.

“Exactly,” returned Du Genre. “I never go beyond them; no Parisian, worthy of his birthplace, ever does, without some extreme cause. The Boulevard des Italiens is a compendium of Paris—it is Paris seen to its greatest advantage. Every comfort and elegance of civilized life is compressed within its narrow compass. Not a pretty woman, not a man of note, but pay their daily homage to it. Our lions in politics, in literature, in art, in fashion, in finance, gravitate hither as towards their natural centre. What the Lyceums were to the ancient Greeks, and the Thermes to the Romans, the Boulevard des Italiens is to the Parisians. Here it is that states-

men, writers, singers, actresses—that everybody and everything are judged, and sentenced without appeal. Paris is the world's brain, and the Boulevard des Italiens is the brain of Paris.”

“I am unwilling to throw cold water on your lyrical effusions,” said Paolo, with a little irony; “but to me, one of the uninitiated, your brain of Paris, after two hours’ enjoyment of it, begins to savour a little of monotony.”

“It is another of the realities, which with cultivation will improve on you,” said Du Genre. “Let us go to the flower market of the Madeleine.”

“To look after grisettes?” questioned Paolo.

“A notion from the left bank of the Seine. For your information, the grisette, as a class, has no existence on this side of the water. Such stray specimens as may emigrate hither, soon soar into the lorette. Lorettes rule supreme here. Let us go.”

They were at this instant standing in front of the Chaussée d’Antin. But for the growing dusk, Paolo might have distinguished the windows of the house where *she* had lived on the Boulevard des Capucines. A deep gloom fell on his countenance, and he answered,—

“No, thank you. I care neither for grisettes

nor lorettes. I feel out of my place in this quarter of the town. I'll bid you good-bye, and go back to my penates."

"Go home at seven?" remonstrated Du Genre;
"scarcely time even for hens to go to roost."

"It will be nearly eight when I reach my street, and I have to be up early in the morning."

"Early—and what for?"

"To go to my employer!"

"Your employer? What a ridiculous notion for a bishop's heir."

"Your pardon; my altered circumstances do not, I presume, allow me to dispense with common honesty. I have been paid in advance for a fortnight, and a fortnight more I shall work."

"Upright as a post—inflexible as an iron bar. You are a capital fellow, and if I were not Felix Pélissier, I would willingly be Paolo Mancini. The 500 scudi will just arrive, I calculate, at the end of your semi-monthly engagement. Should you want any money in the meantime—— No; well, then, no be it. I wonder what your income will be—I hope something handsome."

"I wish you would spare me your calculations just now."

— "And why so, most austere of youths?"

"Because they give me pain—because I loathe the subject."

"Upon my word, this sounds like insanity; and after all the trouble, too, that the notary took to clear the matter of all clouds."

"Clear or not," said Paolo, impetuously, "is nothing to the purpose. Not all the arguing in the world can argue away a feeling when it exists; and I feel that I am wrong in accepting this inheritance. You will see that it will bring me ill-luck. Good night."

"That which will bring you ill-luck," Du Genre cried after him, "if you don't gain wisdom before it is too late, is your false point of view of life. You look upon it as a tragedy, when life is but a farce—but a farce! Good night."

CHAPTER XX.

SELF-DISCIPLINE.

TWILIGHT had superseded broad day, and darkness twilight, and there on her couch still lay Miss Lavinia, apparently in a heavy slumber, yet half conscious, a dead weight on her chest, a dead weight on the crown of her head. If the widow who had let her the lodgings, went once on tiptoe to her sitting-room door, she went twenty times, listening in vain for any, the least sound indicative of life within, returning to her parlour after every disappointment with a still more elongated face, and resuming her knitting with more trembling fingers.

“Are you sure, Molly, that the new lodger has not rung for candles?”

Molly was ready to stake her life that no bell had so much as stirred in the house. Bless her heart, it was quiet enough to hear a pin drop, let alone a bell ring.

Mrs. Tamplin had no eyes but for the gloomy side

of life. Of a lymphatic temperament, and anything but sanguine, even when young, independent, and on the whole happy, she had had all her little stock of spirits squeezed out of her by the simultaneous loss, in her fortieth year, of husband and fortune. "Despair and die," had become her motto ever since. To moan over the past, and tremble for the future, to create difficulties where there were none, and magnify into impossibilities those which existed, to fancy dangers everywhere and to anticipate misfortunes from every quarter,—such was the unfortunate lady's bent of mind and occupation.

All new lodgers were objects of suspicion for Mrs. Tamplin, and the days on which she received any such, were fraught with particular terrors, lest, if a man, he should be a housebreaker, come with intent to rob and murder her; lest, if a woman, she should be one of a gang of thieves, sent for the purpose of admitting her associates. Miss Jones, however, it must be allowed, had so far found favour at first sight with the morose widow as to be spared the degradation of such an hypothesis. But if tolerably free from uneasiness as to any conspiracy against her person and property, Mrs. Tamplin very soon found a cause, and improved it, for alarm and gloomy speculation on another score. This cause, obviously

enough, was the continued deathlike stillness of the new comer, as repeatedly verified by her own observations. "People did not engage rooms," reasoned the low-spirited landlady during the intervals of her stations at the ominous door—"people did not engage rooms to sit still in the dark, as if for a wager; it wasn't natural; people moved about, coughed, sneezed, called for candles, in short, gave signs of being alive; if they didn't, why, then, they must be in a fit, or——"

At this point of her argument with herself, Mrs. Tamplin recollected having once read in the newspaper, of somebody—was it a lady or gentleman? she rather thought it had been a lady—well, of somebody, hiring lodgings for the purpose of taking poison, or cutting his or her throat, whichever it was. Such things had happened, and why shouldn't they again? The young lady looked flurried enough for anything. That she, Mrs. Tamplin, of all the landladies in the world, should have the luck of such lodgers, where was the wonder? It would only be in keeping with all the rest.

The mine was rich, and the miner indefatigable. She pursued a fancied lugubrious scene through all its details, from the first finding of the corpse to coroner and jury sitting on the morrow in the little backroom—pursued the theme with the minuteness

and zest peculiar to the habitual dealers in horrors. The excess of her self-inspired terror at last gave her the courage, she had hitherto lacked, to go and confront the incubus she had conjured up. She seized a candle, hurried across the short passage, opened the little back room with resolution, and went in.

Miss Lavinia, startled into full consciousness, sprung to her feet, and asked,—

“Is that you, Grace? What a fright you gave me.”

“Bless me! she is wandering in her mind,” thought Mrs. Tamplin, this fresh alarm swallowing up her satisfaction at the groundlessness of the old one. She said aloud, “It’s only me, Mrs. Tamplin, with a light. Are you ill, miss?”

“Oh, no! not ill, thank you, only a little giddy and sick,” answered Lavinia, reseating herself.

“You haven’t taken anything to make you so, have you?” eagerly inquired the landlady.

Lavinia shook her head.

“Are you sure, quite sure?” urged Mrs. Tamplin.

“Quite sure,” repeated the poor girl, looking up at her questioner with some amazement. “What makes you ask me that?”

“Sometimes, you know,” stammered the widow,

nearly reassured by the frankness of Lavinia's face,—
“sometimes what one eats or drinks—one's food,
I mean, disagrees with one's stomach—and, no
headache?”

“A little.”

“Your eyes told me so. I am a bit of a doctor;
not a complaint that has ever been heard of, but
I have had it; I am a perfect martyr to ill health.
Will you allow me to feel your pulse? Gracious
goodness! why, what's the matter with you? your
hands are as cold as death.”

Those of the affrighted lady, if not cold, were
manifestly trembling from the contact.

“I am only chilly,” said Lavinia; “I'll lie down
quietly for a little, and then, I dare say, I shall
be well again.”

But Mrs. Tamplin was of a different opinion.
It was a chill, according to her, not to be trifled
with; the best thing to do was to send for a doctor.
This proposition Lavinia opposed with all the little
strength she had left; while Mrs. Tamplin held
to her idea with the energy of despair.

“Just to satisfy me, miss—being both of us
strangers to one another. I dare say it is nothing,
only it makes me fidgety, when I don't see clearly
into things. It isn't much of a sacrifice to see a

good gentleman just for five minutes. We have a doctor next door. Dr. Duncan will see what's amiss at a glance. We call him doctor, but he is only a surgeon; but it would take a dozen doctors to make the like of him, though they are not ashamed to charge a guinea. His visit is but half-a-crown, medicine included. Half-a-crown won't ruin any one. Ah! I see. I may send for him. There's a good girl. I'll be back in a minute."

Poor Lavinia, sick and faint, with her head splitting with pain, was no match for the excited widow; and to get rid of her teasing, gave at last a reluctant consent.

Mrs. Tamplin's vehement burst of eloquence, the reader has already guessed, was produced by a new fit of terror, which had seized on her. She had noticed in the last week's return of deaths for London, a few in the hospitals arising from cholera, and had been ever since in dread expectation of an outbreak of this fearful malady. Now, finding to her dismay, that her lodger's hands were stiff and cold—it being hot weather, mark, and well knowing that cold hands were one of the first symptoms of cholera; and considering further, that if there was to be a visitation of cholera, it was but natural that it should begin at her house; on

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the strength of these premises, we say, Mrs. Tamplin rushed to the conclusion that she had a case of cholera before her, on her very own couch.

Mr. Duncan must surely have had a presentiment that his services would be required, and have accordingly been prepared, for in less than five minutes after the landlady's exit from the little back room, a short, thickset, bull-headed, goggle-eyed personage, with shaggy eyebrows and tufts of hair at the root of every finger, bolted in with a grunt,—

“Is that the person? Ah! how are we?”

Lavinia looked at the assemblage of grimacing, squinting, topsy-turvy, unnatural features hanging over her, in a frightened wonder, tempered, however, by a sense of their ludicrousness, and began an account of her sensations; but was instantly stopped. No need of that; he did not care a bit for symptoms. What he wanted was to go to the root of the evil at once. Had *we* had the measles? Yes, very well; he thought so; he would bet a wager that *we* had had the hooping-cough also. To the best of her recollection, she had had the hooping-cough, said Lavinia. Very good; and he should not be surprised if *we* had been suffering from low spirits lately? He might have guessed that, without being a prophet, from the careworn face, and mourn-

ing dress of the patient. And what did *our* tongue say? The recondite meaning of this query, as explained by Mrs. Tamplin, who had gone through the process *passim*, was that Lavinia was to put out her tongue for inspection. As Lavinia obeyed, Mr. Duncan exclaimed,—

“All right; he saw it as plain as daylight: a trifle wrong with the great *sympathetic*. You needn’t be uneasy, nor you, Mrs. Tamplin; *we’ll* soon be on our legs again, and as jolly as ever. Just desire Molly to come to my house, and I’ll send you a powder—to be taken in half a tumbler of hot brandy-and-water—very hot, and the stronger the better. And you,” turning to Lavinia, “mind you send all blue devils to Coventry; do you hear?”

After this witty sally, heightened by a broad grin, the facetious Esculapius withdrew, escorted by the gloomy landlady.

The short palaver in whispers held in the passage between the surgeon and his escort, must have been greatly to the satisfaction of the latter, for she returned to Lavinia in high spirits enough, to hint at the possibility of a speedy recovery—in a week or two. Mrs. Tamplin saw to the literal execution of Mr. Duncan’s prescription, not sparing her charge one drop of the beverage. If the surgeon meant

it as a practical means of enforcing his recommendation about blue devils, his success was complete. Miss Jones at once fell asleep and slept all night like a post. She awoke next morning refreshed, and wanted to get up, but Mrs. Tamplin would allow of no such imprudence. Mr. Duncan, when he called, said Mrs. Tamplin was perfectly right. Two days after, the medical practitioner paid another visit, and still ordered rest. Miss Lavinia had to keep her bed for a whole week.

This forced leisure was not lost upon her ; no lack of subjects, Heaven knows, had she for earnest and anxious speculations, wherewith to beguile the long hours. Her old self to unlearn, as it were, and a new one to create in keeping with her new circumstances—a particularly knotty point connected with the past to settle ; some course of action to decide upon, with a view to earning her bread—these were the salient subjects principally engrossing her mind during her imprisonment in her bed. Nor without some good results, she hoped, save, indeed, as to the means of gaining employment. All was mist and gloom to her vision in that direction ; not that she anticipated any difficulty in this respect ; she was far too ignorant of the hard realities of the world, far too strongly imbued with one of

Mr. Jones's favourite axioms, that "where there is a will there is a way," for any fear of that kind; but she was in want of any practical data to go by; she must be put on the right road by some one with more experience in the matter. All she knew was through having heard it mentioned *à propos* of some recommendations made to herself, that ladies of education in reduced circumstances turned governesses. But was she qualified to teach? She was rather afraid not. Governesses were expected to know everything, and she hardly knew any subject that she could venture to say she was capable of teaching—music, perhaps, and French and Italian. Would that be enough?

In her honest endeavours to bring her spirit down to the level of her low fortune, Lavinia arrived at a more satisfactory result. The trials she had gone through during the last few months, and the reflections they had induced, had ripened her reason, and awakened her to the sense of the duties and moral responsibilities which life implied. Even when steeped in all its vanities, and untouched by grief, she had had many a sudden qualm of conscience at Paolo's earnest appeal to those duties and responsibilities. The life she had hitherto led, what a poor figure it now cut, viewed by this new light—if,

indeed, such a worthless fluttering of childish impulses, and aimless pursuits, as had filled her days, were worthy to be called by the name of life. Happy still, if by it, she had wronged no one but herself; but she dared not thus console herself; she knew she had wronged others, one, at least, most cruelly, perhaps irreparably. And could she for a moment regret having lost a position, the recollection of which filled her with shame, and alas! with remorse. Had she not, on the contrary, every reason to thank Providence for having hurled her from it—even by a thunderbolt? for forcing her to begin life anew? for granting her the means of atoning for the past?

We alluded to a knotty point which greatly perplexed her; but this also she managed to settle. It related to Lady Augusta, the friend to whom her confidential letters from Rome were addressed. Their friendship had begun in girlhood, at the fashionable boarding-school to which both were sent, and had afterwards continued unabated. Out of a rather numerous circle of nominal friends, Lady Augusta was the only one who had not contented herself with sending cards, or conventional letters of condolence, but had gone to see her former playmate after Mrs. Jones's death, and shown real feeling for her bereave-

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ment. It seemed but natural, under the circumstances, that Lavinia should have no secrets with Lady Augusta, nay, should throw herself for sympathy and support on so staunch a friendship. Her first impulse had been this ; but further thought made her question the wisdom of such a course. That Lady Augusta would befriend her in spite of everything, she had no doubt—but would it be in her power to do so? Would not that perfectly polite, but cold and formal countess, discountenance her daughter's doing so? nay, probably, put an absolute veto against any further intercourse with Lavinia? It was more than likely from one, who had no more than tolerated the friendship between the young girls, and though courteously condescending to the niece, had maintained a frigidly patronizing manner to the uncle and aunt.

After long weighing of the pros and cons of her anticipations with regard to the countess, Lavinia came to the conclusion, that, having doubts on the subject, she would not be justified in running the risk of becoming an apple of discord for parent and child—at all events of entailing upon her friend a painful struggle between duty and inclination. Having most conscientiously made this resolve, Lavinia felt freed, as from a load, from the necessity of

making a confession of what she looked upon as a disgrace, but which was, in fact, a misfortune. To one person alone in the world could she have told all without dying from shame. Not to Paolo; no. She recollected very well his once treating the notion of the transmission of a badge of honour or dishonour, to one who had done nothing to deserve it, as most absurd. But she remembered also—with what confusion, God knows—the contempt with which she had treated such a notion, and the warmth she had displayed in her arguments against it. He whom she could have made her confidant of all men, he from whom she could anticipate receiving sympathy and pity, was Thornton. He had been to her, while himself sorrowing, so forbearing, so generous, so fatherly, that her heart melted at the recollection.

Some disaster must have occurred to him, she was sure, or he would have written. His last letter, in which he told her of his change of abode, and gave his address to the Rue Neuve des Augustins, was dated as far back as the beginning of May. She had written twice to him since then, but had received no replies. Surely, this silence foreboded no good. It seemed to her as if she brought misfortune on all those she loved.

This sad and long monologue with herself was, oftener than she might have wished, interrupted by Mrs. Tamplin, who, under the thick coating of morbid selfishness and vulgarity, forming the staple of her character, had a vein of kindness, which she showed after her manner. She would of an evening bring her knitting into the sick chamber, and by way of raising the spirits of her young lodger, give her the benefit of the newest "mysterious disappearance," "frightful loss of life," or "shocking suicide," as the case might be, found in the day's paper.

Mrs. Tamplin delighted in horrors—would willingly dine, and sup on them. She was ever ready to welcome the most marvellous amount of misery, whether produced by fire, shipwreck, self-murder, or legal executions. Not a casualty occurred in the year, but she noted it down, stored it in her mind.

At other times, she reverted to the better days she had seen, and would enter into a minute explanation of the how, and the why, and the when of the wreck of her fortune, winding up by expressing some doubts, whether the lady who kept three servants in her house at Pimlico, was identical with the woman who let lodgings in Camden Town, with a servant of all work.

Lavinia was determined not to lose patience with her querulous vulgar hostess, and to show herself gentle and sympathizing. Rather a difficult task at first, but it grew easier after a time, until she even felt thankful for the opportunity thus offered of testing her powers of self-control. The effort was not without its reward—it secured her Mrs. Tamplin's good graces, who had never before lighted on so complacent a listener as Miss Jones. And by Lavinia, in the utter isolation to which she was reduced, even the good will of so helpless and low-spirited a creature as her landlady, was not to be disdained.

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